

ACADEMIC STAFF'S ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND OVERSEAS DEGREE TRAINING TO SUPPORT WORD-CLASS EDUCATION

I Nyoman Suteja

Abstract: To support the world-class education program, ISI Denpasar strongly need to promote its capacity and performance, especially those of their academic staff. One of the ways is by increasing the quality and quantity of the academic staff to get overseas post-graduate training program. This program should necessarily include: (a) pre-departure program with the emphasis on the intensive foreign language training; and, (b) whilst-, and post-degree trainings to be organized systematically. The intensive foreign language training to be provided should be focused on their language skills through communicative approach in order to be proficient in listening, speaking, writing, and writing in the target language to support their overseas degree training.

Keywords: English proficiency; overseas degree training; pre-departure preparation; whilst-degree training; post-degree training.

In order to meet with the three basic policies of the Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) as stipulated in the Higher Education Long Term Strategy (HELTS) 2003–2010 (the nation's competitiveness, organization health, and autonomy/decentralization), especially to support the vision to be the "center of excellence" in cultural art studies and art creation, ISI Denpasar strongly needs to promote its capacity and performance. The enhancement of its capacity and performance should firstly be aimed at preparing the human resources as the leading factor to be ready to carry out the implementation of the vision. One of the ways for preparing the human resource readiness is by increasing the quantity and quality of their academic staff to get overseas post-graduate training program. This kind of program can be utilized for up-grading the qualifications and experience of existing academic staff and fostering both foreign and domestic linkage and partnering arrangements to support the "Center of Excellence" (CoE) and "go international" purposes.

THE NEED FOR ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

To prepare for overseas-degree training, an academic staff is required to have a good proficiency in the language used as a means of communication in the foreign host country. Therefore, in order to achieve the utmost benefit of the program, and, or course, beside the initiative by the candidates themselves, the Institute should necessarily provide their staff with a sufficient foreign language training institutionally. At least they should provide a training program of English language, since this language is the most common foreign language to be used in most part of the world.

Learning English as a foreign language is not a matter of acquiring a set of rules and building up a large amount of vocabulary. The English teacher's effort should not be directed at informing the learners about the language, but at enabling them to use it. A learner's mastery of English language is ultimately measured by how well he can use it, not by how much he knows about it. In this respect, learning English language has much in common with learning a musical instrument. The drills and exercises a learner does have one end in sight: to enable him to

become a skilled performer. A language learner who has learnt a lot of grammar but who cannot use the language is in the position of a pianist who has learnt a lot of harmony but cannot play the piano. The learner's command of a foreign language will therefore be judged not by how much he knows, but how well he can perform it in public. Therefore, the old-fashioned translation and grammar-rule methods in learning English language are extremely wasteful and inefficient, for the learner is actually encouraged to make mistakes: he is asked to perform skills before he is adequately prepared. Teachers who use such methods unwillingly create the very problem they seek to avoid. Language learners should never be required to do anything which is beyond his capacity.

A well-designed course is one which takes into account what might be called the learner's state of readiness: the point where he can proceed from easy to difficult. If the learner is to make the most of his abilities, he must be trained to adopt correct learning habits. Therefore, learners must be trained adequately in all four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Emphasizing English language teaching on language functions will be intrinsically motivating, simply because it expresses basic universal communicative functions of language, and because it makes use of notions that are most appropriate to complete the specific function being expressed (Finochiaro, 1979:12).

In line with the above statement, Chamot (1983; in Kesler, 1992:54) states that the functional approach of the second language acquisition theory provides students with the language function essential for academic success. The mastery of vocabulary and structure of a language will mean nothing if the students are not able to use those forms to express or receive the ideas to or from other people. In addition, Wood (1993:4) also states that it is not always the person who is best in manipulating its structure, but it is often the person who is most skilled at processing the complete situation involving himself and his hear, taking account of what knowledge is already shared between them, and selecting items which will communicate his messages effectively. All these views underline that language function is really essential in foreign language teaching. In order to improve the learners' ability in using the target language in communication, they should also be facilitated with communicative functions of language. Since they provide the learners with appropriate communicative expressions and situations, therefore the learners will be able to recognize when, where, and to whom that expression can be used.

The communicative approach in language teaching starts from the theory of language as a means of communication. The purpose of language is for communication, and one form of communication is interaction between speakers. This interaction is facilitated with what is known as the communicative function of language. This function changes with the situation. The form (grammar and vocabulary) of language varies for different interaction (Lubis, 1988:10). Furthermore, we need to know about language like verb forms, vocabulary items, basic grammar patterns, and the like, and have to know how to use them effectively in conversational exchange (Lubis, 1998:1). In language learning, the teacher does not only concern with developing the students' knowledge of structure or grammar and pronunciation, but also need to teach how to use the language. Johnson and Morrow (1936:4) add that language learning will be effective if there is extensive exposure to the target language and plenty of opportunities for the learner to use it. Moreover, in learning language, the learners tend to systematize and create the system which may or may not be appropriate, and they learn by doing this. It means that the teacher allows opportunities for learners to exercise themselves in fluency work to communicate with their friends. The development of fluency implies that the learners must do many things which are not predictable, but which indicate that their natural language learning capability is being exercised and encouraged.

Listening Proficiency

Listening skill should be focused on training learners to have good proficiency in firstly understanding single utterances, then dialogues, talks, and lectures so that they are made to be accustomed with the use of the language when they are spoken to. Listening materials should be in the form of recordings taken from native speakers natural speeches.

Speaking Proficiency

Improving the speaking ability should be focused on training the learners to be skillful in the active use of the language, that is, they should be able to speak in English on what they are going to express to others. Speaking is one of the four language skills that should be taught to English learners in communicative language teaching. In speaking class they should be trained to learn how to send messages about their ideas, opinions, and feelings to others. In speaking class students should also be trained to be able to receive messages accurately so that they can understand their friend's ideas, opinions, and feelings. In this case, students are hoped to be able to use English in real communication.

Reading Proficiency

Heilman (1982:89) defines reading comprehension as making sense of written ideas through meaningful interpretation and interaction with language. Clearly, in reading readers do not only gain meaning through linguistic features printed in the texts, but they should also be able to give meanings or to catch the implied or suggested meaning of the printed text. Hence, reading is best viewed as a multifaceted process affected by several thinking and language abilities. Reading comprehension itself is actually an activity which mostly involves the internal and mental process of thinking and understanding the printed symbols. Thus, in reading comprehension there is an interaction between the reader's mind and the language or the reading text.

Brown (1982:56) states that reading is the product of the process by which we gain understanding of the thought someone has communicated in writing. Reading is the instantaneous recognition of various written symbols, simultaneous association of these symbols with existing knowledge, and comprehension of the information and ideas communicated. It means that when a reader interacts with print, his prior knowledge combines with a visual (written) information results in his comprehending the message. Therefore, reading is actually a conversation of some sort between the writer and the reader.

In order to acquire reading skill, learners should read different kinds of reading texts intensively and extensively. In intensive reading learners should extract specific information from the reading texts. This kind of reading is more an accuracy activity involving reading for details. The objective of intensive reading is to develop the ability to decode meanings of messages by drawing on both syntactical and lexical clues. Hence, the primary concern and emphasis is on skill for recognition rather than for production of language features. In intensive reading the learners should extract from printed symbols and pattern three levels of meanings, namely: lexical meanings (the semantic content of the word expression), structural or grammatical meanings (meaning deriving from interrelationships among words or parts of words from order of words), and socio-cultural meanings of text which people of their own culture attached of the words and groups of words they are reading. This suggests that in order to comprehend any reading text, the learners of English should be able to recognize with case particular words used in the text which clarify the structural function of other words close to them and words which denote logical relationships among different segments of sentences.

Extensive reading, on the other hand, is a fluency activity mainly involving understanding of longer reading texts (Grellet, 1990:123). Extensive reading activities are usually done for one's pleasure or enjoyment. Clearly, extensive reading simply refers to the outside activities the students do in their own with no help or guidance from the teacher. In this respect, they need to read books or reading materials which have been adapted for foreign language teaching because

their reading skill or language skills are still relatively low. As soon as their reading ability increase they should read authentic reading materials which meet their interest and concerns. Grillet (1990) suggests five steps in doing extensive reading, that is survey, question, read, recite, and review (abbreviated as SQ3R). The five steps are briefly discussed below.

1. Survey: When you are assigned a selection of textbooks to study, first survey the pages to get a general idea of the material. Skim rapidly over the topic heading, look at pictures, charts, or diagrams, see if there are questions or a summary at the end.
2. Question: After a quick survey, ask yourself questions based on the materials you have just surveyed. This helps you to read with a purpose, looking for specific answer and anticipating essential points of information.
3. Read: Next, read as rapidly as possible, because you know already what you are looking for and where you are going, your reading speed should be faster than if you had not first surveyed the pages and formulated question for which you seek answers.
4. Recite: At the end of each section, summarize the material by reciting to yourself the important points. This helps you to consolidate the information you have read, relate it to the previous information and prepare yourself for what is to follow.
5. Review: Ultimately when you have accomplished the assignment, immediately review the material so that it will form a united whole. Also when you have the next assignment in the text, review the preceding material, surveying it quickly to refresh your memory, through reading separately and at different times will fit together into the total organization of the material that the author intended.

Writing Proficiency

Writing is one aspect of language skills that should be learnt and mastered in language learning. The process of writing itself consists of encoding a verbal message into graphic symbols that can be decoded by a reader (Harvey, 1987:87). In more detail Harvey clarifies his statement: “ a competent writer must be proficient in the language he is using, and familiar with the mechanics and convention that applies to its written form; in addition he needs to have an adequate information of his topics he intends to discuss, be able to select relevant information, and knows how to utilize it purposefully.

It is possible to learn a foreign language without learning how to write it. For many foreign learners English language, perhaps, even the majority of them, writing is the skill they are not only least proficient, but also the one for which they will have the last to use. This situation is not much different from that in mother tongue as we can see, except for those of us who use writing in some professional capacity. Therefore, writing is a skill which is both limited in value and difficult to acquire. We should be very clear about our purposes in teaching it.

THE OVERSEAS POST-GRADUATE DEGREE TRAINING PROGRAM

The Overseas Post-graduate Degree Training Program

Talking back to the overseas post-graduate training program, it is necessary that the program be planned systematically by implementing a number of activities including English proficiency training in order to achieve its utmost benefit. The implementation of the program can adopt the following two schemes.

Pre-departure Preparation Program.

Before sending academic staff for overseas post-graduate training, it is very necessary that they are provided with certain pre-departure preparation program. This pre-departure preparation program can be made into four levels of preparation activities in order to make it flexible with the various levels of the candidate's foreign language proficiency. Specifically for English training, the four activities can include the followings: (a) lower level basic English training done at ISI

Denpasar; (b) followed by six or nine months of English for academic purposes course (in first ranked English course institutions in Indonesia); (c) GRE/GMAT or TOEFL preparation workshops; and, (d) two to three months of academic courses with English support (in the form of *sit-in* or *sandwich-like* program at a foreign university).

The *lower level basic English training* done at ISI Denpasar can basically be provided for those academic staff whose English proficiency are still very low. This initiative can be carried out with the following planning:

- Conducting socialization activities by putting notices at information boards, socialization meetings, and other personal approach done by department head towards the existing academic staff.
- Inviting qualified foreign language course organizers to bid for language course package to be offered, and then selecting one or two that is/are considered to be the most appropriately qualified one(s) to conduct the initial or lower level basic English language training in the campus of ISI Denpasar based on working contract deal under the funding support by local institution (ISI Denpasar).
- Doing placement test to registered academic staff candidates to determine the level of their English language proficiency before being put into certain class group based on their proficiency level.
- Conducting the packaged courses periodically (one package consisting of 3 months or 24 effective meetings, executed in late afternoon class).
- Making periodic evaluation on the realization of the courses by winning language course organizer(s) to determine whether or not their contract can be extended for next packages, and on the result of the output proficiency. The *English for Academic Purposes Courses* can basically be provided for those academic staff whose English proficiency have been in intermediate level. This initiative can be carried out with the following planning:
- Conducting socialization activities by putting notices at information boards, socialization meetings, and/or other personal approach done by department head on the program of *English for Academic Purposes Courses*.
- Making arrangement for sending those registered academic staff for this program to qualified first class foreign language course institution within Indonesia under the funding support supposedly by DGHE or other funding sources.
- Making periodical implementation report on the realization of the program.
- Making periodically progress evaluation on the realization of the courses attended by academic staff, particularly on the progress of the outputs' English proficiency.

The *GRE/GMAT or TOEFL Preparation Workshops* can basically be provided for those academic staff who have completed their English for Academic Purposes Course or those have had the same level of proficiency. This initiative can be carried out with the following planning:

- Conducting socialization activities by putting notices at information boards, socialization meetings, and other personal approach done by department head on the program of *GRE/GMAT or TOEFL Preparation Workshops*.
- Making arrangement for sending those registered academic staff for this program to qualified and legalized foreign language course institutions that organize *GRE/GMAT or TOEFL Preparation Workshops* within Indonesia under the funding support by DGHE or other funding sources.
- Making periodical implementation report on the realization of the program.
- Making periodically progress evaluation on the realization of the workshops attended by academic staff, particularly on the progress of the GRE/GMAT/TOEFL scores of the participants.

The *Academic Courses with English Support* (a two to three months courses) can basically be provided for those academic staff who have completed their GRE/GMAT/TOEFL Preparation Workshops. This initiative can be carried out with the following planning:

- Conducting socialization activities by putting notices at information boards, socialization meetings, and/or other personal approach done by department head on the program of *Academic Courses with English Support*.
- Making arrangement for sending those registered academic staff for this program to overseas higher education institutions related to their field of study under the funding support supposedly or other funding sources by DGHE.
- Making periodical implementation report on the realization of the overseas program of *Academic Courses with English/Japanese Support*.

Having completed those mentioned English training programs, it is assumed that the participating staff will academically be ready to go for overseas post-graduate training.

Overseas Post-graduate Degree Training Program.

Having finished with the pre-departure preparation program, the candidates are hoped to be ready to join in an overseas post graduate program. For this purpose, ISI Denpasar can make initiative by developing an institutional planning dealing with the future projection to which the priority will be put on so that the Institute can get certain promising position in the bulding of nation competitiveness. As an example, ISI Denpasar can plan to focus its overseas post-graduate program on cultural art as the main priority and supported by international translation and campus tourism management. Using these kinds of priority in academic resource development, it can be projected that in the period of seven up to ten years ahead the Institute will gain a significant progress and prevellege to be center of excellence in cultural art studies. However, this scheme be a success if it is well planned and consistently managed by visionary institution leader teams.

Whatsoever focus to be given prominence, this overseas training program should favourably be designed with 2 (two) sub-activities, namely: (a) whilst training program; and, (b) post-training program.

1 Whilst Training Program:

The whilst-overseas training program can be planned, firstly by up-grading the qualification and experience of the existing staff through a number of activities, such as:

- Conducting socialization activities to potential academic staff by management leaders (Rector, Deans, Department Heads) related to the program.
- Doing selection among registering staff against the eligible criteria and the required qualifications to be needed to support the next Center of Excellence program of each department in the institution.
- Doing a follow-up preparation towards the proposed candidates for further registration process at host universities abroad.
- Making arrangement to get confirmation on the funding scheme of the candidates from the sponsorship.
- Making periodic monitoring on the welfare and progress of the overseas-training scholars through coordinative context with the host institution abroad.
- Improving the management of academic facilities including the up-grading facilities prior to and in anticipation of the scholars' return.
- Making letter of agreement requiring the staff under the program to agree with teaching load for ISI Denpasar and contribute to educational and facility plans while studying abroad, and may be assumed a supervisory role for S-1 and S-2 thesis carried out remotely through a variety of media (electronic mail and video conference). As the consequence, ISI Denpasar

should strive for finding ways of how to provide the institution with innovation in employing advances in communication technology (such as supported by GDLN) to facilitate this distance learning modality. However, their primary responsibility is how to finish their study in the shortest possible time, and teaching responsibility should be adjusted accordingly.

Secondly, by making arrangement to find ways to foster both foreign and domestic linkage and partnering arrangements. In order that opportunities to get links with foreign universities is considered to be an important outcome of the overseas scholarship programs, ISI Denpasar plan to pro-actively pursue further steps to forge strong ties with the foreign universities to which Ph.D. scholars study. The expected strong ties include: staff and student exchanges, periodic distance learning opportunities for ISI Denpasar staff and students through the utilization of advances in communication technology (such as GDLN network), joint research and art creation projects, art exhibitions and performances, and art workshop collaborations. To realize these initiatives, the mechanism is planned as the followings:

- The scholars on overseas training program are suggested to make approaches to build any possible ties with the universities at which the scholars study.
- Any possibility of partnership opportunities to be achieved by the scholars should immediately be informed to ISI Denpasar in order that the opportunities are put into their consideration for any further follow-up according the Institution needs and priority scale.
- Administrating the achieved partnership opportunities based on their types of partnership, duration of time, the possible benefits to be achieved by ISI Denpasar, and their sustainability.

2 Post Training Program

Firstly by making arrangement to find ways to facilitate the returning scholars with up-to-date teaching learning infrastructures and teaching equipment/aids to be required for world-class teaching learning activities. It is important in order to effectively utilize the existing stock of Ph.D. qualified staff and to allow the work of returning scholars to engage full time in teaching learning activities. Its implementation can adopt the following scheme:

- Making preparation on the re-entry assimilation and support to returning scholars with adequate and up-to-date provision of utilities and equipment (among others, high speed internet access) in order to support the world-class education program of the Institute.
- Making preparation on the provision of opportunities for career advancement for returning scholars.
- Providing returning scholars with incentive-based remuneration packages so that they can explore their utmost for the benefit of the ISI Denpasar students.
- Assigning returning scholars to teaching activities in order that they can implement their qualification and overseas experience for better contribution to education at ISI Denpasar.
- Secondly, by making arrangement to find ways to facilitate the returning scholars with sufficient facilities for conducting research and art creation activities in order to perform as a part of Center of Excellence in research and art creation.
- Making preparation on the re-entry assimilation and support to returning scholars with adequate and up-to-date provision of sufficient funding for research in order to support the center of excellence in research and art creation activities.
- Assigning returning scholars to research and art creation activities in order that they can implement their qualification and overseas experience for better contribution to promote the nation's competitiveness in research and art creation activities.

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION TO THE OVERALL INSTITUTION'S DEVELOPMENT

Based on the priorities related to the vision, mission, and objectives of the Institute, the aforementioned overseas-post graduate degree training and English preparation program are expected to contribute to the actualization of the Center of Excellence (CoE) program in specific, and to those of the Institute's vision, mission, and objectives in general, in order to be in line with those of the three strategic issues of HELTS 2003-2010. The contribution is expected to involve in its three main frameworks of higher education (instruction, research, and community services) related to the efforts of preservation, revitalization, and development of Indonesian cultural art in general.

Related to the three strategic issues of HELTS 2003-2010, the contribution of this program is also expected to be very significant, at least, seen from the provision of the required human resource qualification and their overseas academic experience. In the context of sharing in the nation competitiveness, the program with its activities will significantly help improve the Institute's capacity and performance to support the "go international" program, and to contribute in the enhancement of the role of ISI Denpasar in making Indonesian cultural art to be worldwide recognized. In the context of national integration, the increasing capacity and performance of the Institute in its three main frameworks of higher education (instruction, research, and community services) related to the effort of preservation, revitalization, and development of Indonesian cultural art in general through the availability and good management of the qualified and experienced human resources are hoped to contribute in strengthening the cross-culture understanding among those ethnic groups in various parts of Indonesia to one another for national integration purposes. And, in the context of giving benefits to wider community, the impact of the qualified and experienced human resources, in the long run, are hoped to be of significance in increasing the Institute's social responsibility.

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