

## **EFFORT OF THE LECTURES TO IMPROVING ENGLISH SKILLS IN INTENSIVE COURSE CLASS**

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**Abstract:** First-semester English Education students often encounter difficulties in comprehensively mastering English language skills. These difficulties arise from the diverse backgrounds and varying abilities of each student. This situation presents a challenge for lecturers who teach courses in the early semesters, particularly in Intensive Course classes. This study aims to investigate the efforts made by lecturers to enhance the English language skills of students in English Education. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research participants were lecturers who teach Intensive Course classes at a private university. The results of this study indicate that lecturers make various efforts to improve students' English language skills in Intensive Courses in response to the challenges encountered in the classroom. The main challenges faced by lecturers include differences in students' English proficiency levels and their diverse academic backgrounds. To address these challenges, lecturers implement several strategies and efforts, including: (1) utilizing students with strong English proficiency as learning resources for their peers; (2) providing additional instruction time outside regular class hours; (3) supporting the formation of student study groups; (4) offering guidance on the use of technology and AI; and (5) motivating students to remain enthusiastic throughout the learning process. Consequently, lecturers improve the English proficiency levels of first-semester students to ensure a more effective learning process.

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**Keywords:** Lecturer's Challenges; Lecturer's Effort; English Skills; Intensive Course

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Technologies have also made many progress. They are tools that help people ease their daily work, including in the field of education. Along with the times, various technologies have also progressed. Today, education is no longer a privilege for certain groups (Gadzali, 2023). This shows that education is accessible to people from all walks of life. With the support of technology, people can utilize various software that supports the learning process. Therefore, technology has an important role in supporting the learning process.

English is a global communication tool that many countries use as a first or second language. However, in Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language. According to Setiyadi (2020) English is only learned in the school environment. This leads to English not being used for daily communication, but rather as a special need in learning and career. Thus, the status of English in Indonesia focuses on academic learning and specific needs, not as a primary means of communication.

According to Alkaromah et al. (2020), Web-based and non-web-based smartphone devices provide access to technology to support the learning process. This technological development

significantly impacts people's lives, making it increasingly difficult to separate from the use of technology, especially with the widespread availability of various software applications offered by smartphones. This phenomenon is in line with the industrial era 4.0, which is characterized by digitalization and the use of technologies such as AI and ICT. ICT, as one of the implementations of 21st-century skills, plays an important role in developing information, media, and technology skills (Eryansyah & Erlina, 2023). Digitalization also provides significant benefits in the learning process, especially in English language learning, by helping teachers and lecturers deliver materials more effectively.

Technology is one of the tools that can be utilized in the learning process, including in teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Technology allows lecturers and students to access various learning applications easily and quickly. According to Fitria (2021), some examples of AI-based technologies that can be used in English language learning include Google Translate, Text-to-Speech (TTS), English Able, Orai, Elsa, Chatbot, Duolingo, Neo, and others. These apps should be utilized by students to improve their English skills. However, in reality, students often use technology not to support learning. Therefore, the technology is not optimal.

A study from Aslam et al. (2023) about English course programs to improve English language skills. This study uses a mixed-method approach, with the questionnaire and observation for data collection. There were The participants of the current study were a sample of 300 students of the BS 4-year program (who were in the second year: fourth semester) belonging to different majors (such as English Literature, Urdu, Mathematics, Botany, Education, Economics, Geography and Mass Communication) and 30 teachers who were teaching the same. The findings of the study revealed that the English Compulsory course was partially fruitful for ESL learners; however, some amendments could make the course contents a lot better. Recommendations for improvement included practical application of the material with the use of activities in the class, an increase in the period of the course, and employment of the latest methods of teaching in the classroom. It should be the responsibility of the course and syllabus designers to conduct a need analysis to deduce the necessities of the students in the current and future situations.

Another study from Nurcahyani and Bahrani (2021) discusses about teaching strategy of intensive course. This study use qualitattve approach with the decriptive design. This study use interview to collect the data. There was one English lecturer of English Course at Language Center IAIN Samarinda. The finding of this research showed that the lecturer's strategies in teaching English as follows: (1) The lecturer prepared the Lesson Plan (RPS) before teaching English. Lesson Plan has an important role to improving the quality of education. (2) In giving materials the lecturer was not only use text book but also used article and internet. (3) The methods used

by teacher in teaching English were Grammar Translation Method. (4) The media used by lecturer in teaching English were Visual.

Therefore, this study wants to examine efforts and challenges lectures to improving English skills in English education department especially to first semester in privat university in Malang. The reseacher will this topic because limited research that examines the efforts of lecturers to improve English language skills in the first semester. Based on the explanation above, the research questions are as follows: How do the efforts of lectures to improve English skills? What the challenges faced by lecturers to improve English language skills?

## **METHOD**

This research will examine the efforts of lectures to improve English skills. The researcher uses a qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning of a social problem given by individuals, and this method has a flexible structure. This study researcher uses a case study design, especially a single case study. The researcher chose a single case study because it provides the opportunity to analyze a particular phenomenon thoroughly and generate insights that cannot be achieved with other research designs. Therefore, this research aims to determine the efforts of lecturers to improve English language skills in intensive course classes for early semester students.

A private university in Malang was chosen as the research site. Participants were selected from lecturers at private universities in Malang using purposive sampling, with the criteria of a lecture-teaching intensive course using ICT in the class. The lecturers chosen were those teaching intensive courses and using ICT in the classroom, thus reducing the impact of novelty. Then, with the participant's consent, the researcher disguised the name of the intensive course lecturer.

Interviews were conducted using Semi-structured Interviews with eleven open-ended questions to collect empirical data. Instruments were self-constructed with validity by the expert. Here is one of the questions: "How do you adjust to students' difficulties in teaching methods, media, and approaches?". Interviews were conducted for about 15-25 minutes each round of face-to-face interviews, with one-on-one interviews to keep participants comfortable and maintain participants' confidentiality. The interviews were performed using the native language of Bahasa Indonesia to minimize misunderstandings. The interviews were conducted using the native language of Bahasa Indonesia to minimize misunderstandings. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English for additional analysis. As part of our effort to maintain the authenticity of the quality of the translated transcripts, the researchers asked the participants to comment on the transcripts and provide suggestions for improvement. In the interviews, the researchers asked the participants about the lecturers' efforts in improving English language skills in the intensive course.

This research uses thematic analysis to analyze the data from the interviews. According to Braun and Clarke (2014), thematic analysis has six steps to analyze. First, the researcher is to listen repeatedly to the recordings of the interviews about the efforts of lectures to improve English skills in intensive course classes. The second is to convert the recordings into written form. The third is to read the transcripts repeatedly to understand the data taken. After gaining an understanding of the data reached, coding is carried out, and patterns that are relevant to the problem under study are found. Then grouping similar expressions were grouped to reveal emerging themes. The final step is to categorize these themes into the problem under study.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this section, explain the results of the research that will be analyzed and discussed. This study examines the efforts of lecturers to improve English language skills in intensive course students through interviews. Each participant will answer the interview questions one by one with one question. Based on the results of the participants' answers, there are challenges when teaching so the participants make efforts to improve English language skills in students in intensive course classes.

### *Challenges faced by lecture in Intensive Course Class*

#### *Different levels of English proficiency*

The participants' interviews resulted in the same answer: the English level of students in the intensive course class is mostly at the Pre-Intermediate or A1 level.

*[The proficiency level is still pre-intermediate, still at pre. Not intermediate, but pre-intermediate.*

*Some are good, some are proficient, some are quite proficient, some are low, and some are very poor.]*

*-P1*

This answer is almost the same as previous research from Subandiyah et al. (2023); the first problem is related to the complex grammar of the complex Indonesian language, which is difficult for foreign speakers to understand, and the need to adapt teaching methods to suit the learning styles and needs of foreign students. (Oktavia et al. 2022) cited the lack of time to practice as one of the challenges for them in teaching speaking skills to young learners. Another result from Khalisa et al. (2022) students' low proficiency in English, students' negative learning attitude, students' low critical thinking.

#### *Different backgrounds*

Some participants mentioned that in addition to the challenges faced, such as the different backgrounds of students in the intensive course class, as explained by P1, majoring in English with different motivations, P2 said the change from high school to college.

*[Because at the beginning, and enter English with different motivations. Some are because of their parents. Some are because they avoid math. It's not for them to learn English.] -P1*

*[The change from high school to college, when in high school, maybe English lessons tend to be textbooks, then entering college, everything must be performed.] -P2*

According to Kumayas and Lengkoan (2023), Students come from different regions and from different school backgrounds, so lecturers face different difficulties. Students' problems and difficulties are also important for lecturers to know when teaching grammatical structures (Kumayas & Lengkoan 2023). Because of the lack of proper instructional material, like using different audio-visual aids, multimedia, projectors, movies, recordings, and language labs, they faced problems in communication and expression viewpoints (Aslam et al., 2023). Like the results of previous research the results of this study said that learning from scratch and the change from senior high school to college is one of the challenges faced by lecturers.

Therefore, the challenges faced by the participants are the different levels of English language ability in each student. On the other hand, it is influenced by the reasons for entering the English education department with different backgrounds.

### ***Effort of the lecture***

#### *Peer teaching with collaborative learning*

Using classmates to help lecturers in class is one of the efforts made by lecturers to improve students' English language skills in the early semesters. On the other hand, there are lecturers who use collaborative learning as a learning method. According to participants, when answering interview questions, participants when answering interview questions.

*[I will ask them in general. Next, I will ask for 5 tutors. So, there are 5 children whose English is already decent, and then I make them into tutors in the class. Then, I always group them. Secondly, to teach them for individual learners, I provide report activities. So, every day, they have to learn to speak. It's at least 30 minutes every day.] -P2*

Based on the research from Khalisa et al. (2022) students are divided into mixed-ability groups, the materials are adjusted to the students' level of proficiency, rules and consequences are set with students, and activities that promote critical thinking are designed.

#### *Provide extra time for students outside the class*

In this result, participants mentioned that they provide additional time for students outside of class. This shows that participants make efforts to improve English skills for students in intensive course classes. Based on the results of the interview, P2.

*[Oh yes, I always tell them that if they need me outside of class hours, I'm ready. But the children don't seem to be ready.] -P2*

Based on the result from Khalisa et al. (2022) grouping students into mixed-ability groups, adjusting the materials to the student's level of proficiency, setting rules and consequences with students, and designing activities that promote critical thinking.

#### *The existence of a study club*

Based on the results of the interview P2 supports the existence of a study club so that students can improve their English skills. With the existence of the study club P1 hopes that students can improve their English skills, especially how to speak.

*[I encourage you to always make a study club. Yesterday I checked, have you made a study club? I did, I did.] -P2*

Based on the result from Maynisa et al. (2024) that the tactics used by EFL lecturers include Bottom-Up and Top-Down tactics, and Direct Strategies where lecturers use these tactics to make students understand the meaning of the audio recording that is being done to understand vocabulary then ask them to estimate the topic of conversation based on the audio outline.

*Use technology to help improving English skills*

In the results of the interview, P2 said that using technology as a tool to help participants improve English language skills in intensive course classes.

*[In an effort to increase the effectiveness of English learning, I encourage students to utilize various digital resources. Platforms such as the British Council and YouTube provide relevant and engaging audio and video materials. In addition, social media such as TikTok can be utilized as a means to practice language skills authentically...Then, to improve my speaking skills, I recommend using Gemini. Gemini is like ChatGPT, but for speaking.] -P2*

This answer is almost the same as previous research from Muslem et al. (2022), which found that using YouTube teaching materials with peer support significantly improved student mastery of the subject content of ELTMC compared to those without peer support. Marpaung (2024) also states that integrating AI into speaking classes can enhance language proficiency through iterative feedback and adaptation.

*Motivate the students*

Based on the results of the interview, the participants' efforts in improving English language skills by providing motivation to students in intensive course classes. That way students are expected to improve their English skills well.

*[Always, when I meet them. Everyday, when I meet them. Encourage. I said always enthusiasm. The initial key is enthusiasm. If you have enthusiasm, you must be eager to learn.] -P2*

According to Februansyah et al. (2023) that EFL lecturers employed four motivational strategies namely using music, employing verbal motivation, building rapport with students, and hiring collaborative learning. Another study from Rahmayana et al. (2024) a notable emphasis on motivational factors such as the necessity for global communication and professional growth as the primary motivators, while effective learning tactics encompass the utilization of digital resources, organized speaking exercises, and participation in hands-on activities.

Participants' efforts in improving English language skills are due to the challenges faced. Therefore, participants make efforts to improve English language skills by using learning methods

that are in accordance with the abilities of students, providing additional time for students outside the classroom, supporting the existence of study clubs, and motivating students to keep their enthusiasm for improving English language skills.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and results of this study, it can be concluded that the participants tried to improve their English language skills because of the challenges they faced. The results showed that the effort emerged as a response to the challenges previously experienced by the participants. Most of the participants faced challenges such as the level of English proficiency of students who were mostly at the pre-intermediate level and the diversity of backgrounds of students who chose English Education majors. Therefore, participants made various efforts to improve the English skills of first-semester students, such as utilizing one of the students with good English skills as a teaching partner and forming study groups that combine students with different English skills. In addition, efforts made by participants include providing additional time outside of learning hours, supporting the existence of study clubs among classmates, recommending the use of technology or AI-based platforms, such as TikTok, YouTube, ChatGPT, or Gemini, to improve English skills. Participants also motivated students to remain enthusiastic, emphasizing that the key to enthusiasm comes from oneself.

Some suggestions for future research on this topic can be given, given that this study only involved two participants. In addition, this study only focused on the efforts and challenges faced by the participants in improving their English language skills. Therefore, future research is suggested to focus on the impact of the use of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) by lecturers in helping to improve students' English skills.

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