



LECTURERS' TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH STUDENTS AT MUHAMMADIYAH ACEH UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study investigated the teaching strategies employed by lecturers for first-year students at the University of Muhammadiyah Aceh. Through interviews with four lecturers, the research explored their perspectives on teaching methods and the challenges of instructing first-year students. While three lecturers noted minimal differences between teaching first-year and more advanced students, one highlighted distinct approaches and materials tailored to the needs of newcomers. The challenges identified included students' limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and low motivation. To address these issues, lecturers primarily employed active learning, discussions, and multimedia resources, adapting these strategies based on class dynamics, student motivation, and vocabulary levels. The use of educational games was infrequent, as mentioned by one lecturer. The study also examined students' perceptions of these strategies, revealing generally positive feedback. Most students appreciated the variety of strategies, found them effective, and reported minimal boredom or confusion. Group discussions were common and well-received, while games, experiments, or simulations were less frequently utilized, reflecting their sporadic use by lecturers. Overall, the research emphasized the positive impact of diverse teaching strategies on students' comprehension and engagement, highlighting areas for potential improvement in language teaching methods.

Keywords: Lecturer, Teaching Strategies, First-year Students

A. INTRODUCTION

First-year students frequently face unique problems as they adjust to university life, especially in language classes. These obstacles are multidimensional, including academic, social, and personal components. The transition from high school to university often involves students to adjust to a more self-directed learning environment, deal with an increased academic workload, and traverse a new social scene. These problems are magnified for students' learning English as a second language, who must additionally contend with linguistic and cultural variances.

Effective teaching practices are quite important in this situation. Teaching approaches customized to the needs of first-year students are critical for resolving



these problems, creating a supportive learning environment, and promoting academic success. Lecturers must not only deliver linguistic teaching, but also help students gain confidence, motivation, and participation in the learning process.

Lecturers' strategies have a considerable impact on the success of the teaching and learning process. A teaching strategy is a collection of learning activities designed to meet specified educational goals (Guevara et al., 2020). Instructional strategies are critical in helping students achieve their learning objectives. As a result, educators must develop and implement suitable instructional tactics in the classroom. The teaching and learning process is designed to help students achieve their educational goals.

The use of technology in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is critical for providing an effective and engaging learning environment. It dramatically increases student engagement and motivation, resulting in better learning outcomes. However, despite these advantages, many teachers struggle to incorporate technology owing to a lack of training and resources. Students, on the other hand, believe that using technology to learn English is advantageous, particularly in terms of improving their language skills. Finally, the successful deployment of educational technology is dependent not only on the availability of resources, but also on instructors' attitudes and skills to properly incorporate technology into the curriculum (Farsia and Suja, 2017).

Furthermore, as Husna points out, teachers who are knowledgeable about their subject matter and pedagogy can motivate students to study, use effective teaching strategies, successfully deliver the curriculum, and stimulate innovation. As a result, one of the most important skills for professional instructors is the ability to implement effective teaching strategies that are personalized to the needs of their students. Teachers can employ a variety of the strategies to attain educational goals. According to Cole (2008), teachers are responsible for meeting students' educational requirements through effective teaching approaches. They must carefully select strategies that are appropriate for both the topic being taught and the characteristics of the student population. When the learning process is properly linked with the subject matter and



the teacher's teaching strategies, students are more likely to profit from instruction. Finally, it is the teacher's obligation to select instructional methods that align with the established learning objectives, thereby fostering a good and productive learning environment.

Lecturers can combine numerous instructional strategies to produce a successful teaching strategy. According to Maulidar et al. (2019), utilizing a variety of teaching approaches aids in accomplishing educational goals and objectives. However, teachers must note that the success of these strategies is dependent on how well they help pupils absorb and retain new knowledge. A tactic that works well for one topic or setting may not be effective in another, emphasizing the significance of choosing the appropriate approach based on the subject matter and the needs of the class. As a result, lecturers must develop the ability to select relevant strategies, which has a substantial impact on learning results.

Effective English teaching practices have evolved dramatically in recent years, reflecting advances in both pedagogical research and technology. Active learning is a popular strategy that has been found to improve student involvement and comprehension. According to Freeman et al. (2017), active learning strategies such as group activities and peer teaching boost student performance significantly when compared to traditional lecture-based education. These strategies enable students to actively participate in the learning process, which deepens their comprehension. Blended learning has also gained popularity, integrating in-person education with online resources. This technique enables better adaptability and individualized learning experiences. As Graham (2019) points out, blended learning allows for individualized instruction and gives students access to a variety of digital tools and materials that cater to diverse learning styles and needs.

On the other hand, gamification, or adding game elements into education, has emerged as a highly effective technique for enhancing student motivation and engagement. According to Kapp (2020), gamified learning environments make education more dynamic and fun, perhaps leading to better information retention and application. Using game principles such as prizes and challenges, lecturers can create a



more dynamic and compelling learning environment. Furthermore, formative evaluation is increasingly being used to provide continuing feedback and help to students. According to Black and Wiliam (2020), formative assessments, such as quizzes and peer reviews, can assist uncover learning gaps and direct instructional adjustments in real time, hence improving overall learning outcomes.

Finally, culturally responsive education acknowledges and addresses the different backgrounds of students. Gay (2018) highlights that customizing training to students' cultural backgrounds fosters inclusivity and relevance, which can increase engagement and achievement. In summary, incorporating active learning, blended learning, gamification, formative assessment, and culturally sensitive teaching aligns with current best practices in English language training, resulting in increased student engagement and learning results.

From the explanation above, these research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What teaching strategies do lecturers use in teaching first-year English students at University of Muhammadiyah Aceh?
2. How do students perceive the effectiveness of the teaching strategies employed?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on effective language instruction methodologies and provide practical recommendations for lecturers working with first-year students. This research seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering actionable insights that can enhance teaching effectiveness and student outcomes in language courses.

B. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research approach to investigate lecturers' instructional strategies and the obstacles they encounter when teaching first-year English students at Muhammadiyah Aceh University. The study's goal is to provide a full knowledge of these tactics from both the lecturer's and students' viewpoints. A qualitative technique is used to capture the depth and complexity of the teaching and learning experiences, resulting in rich, detailed descriptions and insights.



The key data sources for this study are four lecturers from Muhammadiyah Aceh University who educate first-year English students, as well as the students themselves. The speakers were chosen based on their experience and willingness to participate in the study. Their insights provide useful information on the strategies they use, the difficulties they face, and their perceptions of student engagement and comprehension. The students' perceptions on the success of the teaching strategies used by their lecturers are critical to understanding how these strategies affect their learning experience. Student feedback helps to validate lecturers' ideas and identify areas of development.

Moreover, the data collection methods for this study include semi-structured interviews with lecturers and questionnaires with students, which were used to acquire thorough and nuanced insights from both groups. Semi-structured interviews are done with four selected lecturers to learn about their teaching strategies, obstacles, and viewpoints on the distinctions between teaching first-year and advanced students. Each interview lasts 45-60 minutes and follows a predetermined interview framework, ensuring consistency while allowing for more in-depth investigation of specific themes. The guide asks lecturers about their teaching strategies, obstacles they face, their opinions of student motivation and engagement, and how they use various instructional strategies such as active learning, discussions, multimedia, and learning games.

A survey is issued to first-year English students to gather feedback on the effectiveness of their lecturers' teaching strategies and their overall learning experience. The survey includes both closed-ended questions (e.g., Likert scale items) and open-ended questions to gather quantitative data on student satisfaction as well as qualitative data on personal experiences and suggestions. Survey questions inquire about students' satisfaction of classes, their impressions of the efficacy of various teaching tactics, instances of boredom or bewilderment, and their opinions on the usage of group discussions, games, experiments, and simulations.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



From the interview data, three out of four lecturers reported only minor differences in their teaching strategies for first-year students compared to those for advanced students. However, one lecturer highlighted the need for distinct methods and materials tailored specifically for first-year students, noting that beginners often require more foundational support and simplified instruction to effectively build their basic language skills.

The primary challenges identified by lecturers included vocabulary gaps, lack of confidence, and low motivation among first-year students, emphasizing the importance of a supportive and patient teaching approach to gradually develop their language abilities and confidence. To tackle these challenges, lecturers mainly utilized active learning, discussions, and multimedia resources as their key teaching strategies. Active learning techniques, such as interactive activities and problem-solving exercises, were used to engage students and foster deeper understanding, while discussions encouraged collaborative learning and critical thinking. Multimedia resources, like videos and digital presentations, catered to different learning styles and made lessons more engaging. These strategies were adapted based on class dynamics, student motivation, and vocabulary proficiency. Learning games were occasionally employed to introduce fun and reinforce learning in a more informal setting.

The findings from the lecturers' perspectives reveal a generally uniform approach to teaching both first-year and advanced students, with three out of four lecturers noting only minor differences in their strategies for these groups. This consistency suggests that lecturers often adjust their teaching methods to accommodate diverse student abilities and backgrounds, aiming to maintain a cohesive approach. However, one lecturer's recognition of the need for specialized methods and materials for first-year students highlights the importance of tailoring strategies to address the specific developmental needs of beginners. Challenges such as vocabulary gaps, lack of confidence, and low motivation necessitate a thoughtful approach that emphasizes foundational support and engaging instructional strategies.

Lecturers' use of active learning, discussions, and multimedia resources demonstrates a commitment to interactive and varied teaching methods. Active



learning techniques, such as problem-solving exercises and interactive activities, promote student engagement and deeper understanding. Discussions facilitate collaborative learning and critical thinking, enhancing classroom dynamics. Multimedia resources, tailored to different learning styles, make lessons more accessible and engaging for students with varying proficiency levels and interests. The occasional use of learning games further enriches the learning experience by providing interactive and enjoyable reinforcement of the material.

Furthermore, from the responses of the students, they generally responded positively to the teaching strategies used by their lecturers, appreciating the efforts to make classes interactive and engaging, which helped maintain their motivation and interest in the subject. Most students found the diverse strategies both effective and engaging, with few instances of boredom or confusion reported. Group discussions were especially well-received, as they provided valuable opportunities for peer interaction and learning. Although games, experiments, and simulations were used less frequently, they were still appreciated when included, as these methods added variety and helped students grasp concepts through practical application.

In brief, the findings underscore the effectiveness of diverse teaching strategies in boosting student engagement and learning outcomes. The lecturers' use of active learning, discussions, and multimedia resources, tailored to the specific needs of first-year students, proved to be highly beneficial. Students' positive feedback on these strategies highlights their potential to make language learning more effective and enjoyable.

From the students' perspective, the positive reception of teaching strategies highlights their effectiveness in fostering engagement and learning. Most students found the varied approaches effective and engaging, reporting minimal boredom or confusion during lessons. Group discussions were particularly valuable, as they facilitated peer interaction, perspective sharing, and deeper understanding through collaborative learning. While games, experiments, and simulations were used less frequently, students appreciated their inclusion for providing practical, experiential learning opportunities and enhancing comprehension. The alignment between



lecturers' strategies and students' feedback underscores the success of adapting teaching methods to address diverse learning needs and preferences. The positive student responses suggest that interactive and varied instructional techniques play a crucial role in sustaining interest, motivation, and understanding of the subject matter.

D. CONCLUSION

Finally, the findings emphasize the importance of flexible and student-centered teaching strategies in tackling the obstacles faced by first-year English students. Active learning, discussions, multimedia tools, and occasional interactive methods have been demonstrated to significantly boost student engagement and learning outcomes. In the future, more research and improvement of these tactics could improve language instruction and help first-year students achieve academic success. Future study might evaluate the long-term benefits of these pedagogical practices, as well as other measures to sustain and improve student engagement and performance in language learning contexts.

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