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## EXPLORING ESP STUDENTS' ENGLISH SKILLS BY "ENGLISH TALENT COMPETITION"

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### Abstract

Designing ESP course sometimes is not easy as designing general English course. It needs some efforts to handle and realize it because many aspects should be considered in conducting it, such as analyzing students' needs, formulating goals and objectives, conceptualizing the content, selecting and developing materials, evaluating, getting students' feedback, etc. Still, those are not enough for serving ESP students in learning English. Many approaches, methods, strategies are also needed in order the ESP students are interested in joining ESP course. As a practitioner of ESP, the writer always tries to find and conduct appropriate and effective programs which can encourage and explore ESP students' English skills. One of them is English Talent Competition (ETC). It is an annual program conducted by Language Center of Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo since 2014. This study aims at sharing an idea about the implementation of ETC in order to motivate ESP students improve and develop their English skills.

**Keywords:** ESP Students; English Skills; English Talent Competition

### INTRODUCTION

This study aims to describe about the implementation of 'English Talent Competition' in exploring the ESP Students' English Skills. As many ESP teachers have known that it is not easy to motivate non-English departments' students to learn and improve English because of many reasons. That is why the writer as a chief of language center always tries to find and make special programs for ESP students in her university such as English Learning Day, Video Field Trip, Debate Forum, English Community, etc., besides her main duty to give English certifications. There are many reasons why it happens. Some of them are because English does not belong to the

subject in their curriculum, they don't realize that English is important for their future in order to get good jobs; English is categorized as difficult subject, etc. The factors can be from internal and external of learners.

### **English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**

UK University Foundations in Asiyah (2015) determines that this term (ESP-English for Specific Purposes) refers to the teaching of a specific genre of mostly technical English for students with specific goals, careers or field of study. Examples include English for Academic Purposes (students will enter an English-speaking university), English for Business & Management, or Hotel & Catering English (for hotel and tourism professionals).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 8) state about ESP, "In short, the view gained ground that the English needed by a particular group of learners could be identified by analyzing the linguistic characteristics of their specialist area of work or study. 'Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need' became the guiding principle of ESP."

Moreover Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 8) add that learners were seen to have different needs and interest, which would have an important influence on their motivation to learn and therefore on the effectiveness of their learning. This lent support to the development of courses in which 'relevance' to the learners' needs and interests was paramount.

From those definitions above, it can be concluded that ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learners' reasons for learning.

### **ESP Students at Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo**

ESP students are the students who learn English in specific fields. There are 14 groups of ESP students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, they are Islamic Studies, Mathematic, Early Childhood Teacher Education, Civic Education, Governmental Science, Communication, Management, Accounting, Midwifery, Nursing, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Information Technology and Law.

According to Wits Language School (2017), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses focus on developing English communication skills in a specific discipline, such as finance, marketing, management, human resources, engineering and strategic thinking. Emphasis is given to the language and communication requirements in a particular professional field. This field specific language communication training enables participants to master relevant communication and professional skills and, in so doing, meet the needs of industry locally and internationally.

Knowledge and technical know-how are clearly important, but these must be presented with an excellent standard of communication skills. After all, success is not only based on what you know but also on how you can communicate it. Indeed, communication skills are considered one of the best career enhancers. In fact, evidence suggests that employers in all occupational fields place greater value on employees' communication skills than they do on their technical skills and rate it as a top priority for both securing and retaining employment.

### **English Talent Competition**

English Talent Competition (ETC) is an annual program conducted by Language Center of Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. It has been conducted for three times since 2014. This ETC is a part of LC programs to support English Certification program for ESP students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. So the participants were from many non-English Department students. The first ETC was conducted in 2014 with the competition of ESP presentation, Reading English news reading, speech and stand-up comedy, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2015 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2016, stand-up comedy changed into singing English songs.

### **METHOD**

According to Creswell (2014; 32), qualitative research is "...an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem". This study is a descriptive qualitative research that aims at describing the implementation of ETC to explore the English skills of ESP Students conducted by Language Center of Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. ETC is conducted annually. The first ETC was in 2014, followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2015 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2016. The data collection in this study based on interview, observation and document analysis as Ary et al (2002; 236) state that the most widely used tools in qualitative research are

interviews, document analysis, and observation. Moreover Green (2007) states that qualitative research defined by its purpose and it presents data through words. Qualitative research requires deep explanation on the study conducted start from preparation, process until interpreting data

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

English Talent Competition (ETC) has been implemented for three times by Language Center of Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. The first ETC was in 2014, participated by 13 departments with the number of contestants 142, In 2015, followed by 15 departments with number of students 131 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> was 135 students. Based on the result of ETC, observation and interview with the dean of faculty, vice rectors, chief of departments, lecturers, juries, ESP students, ETC was very supportive to explore the ESP students English skills. The data of participants can be seen on the tables below:

Table 1. The Data of the First ETC in 2014

<b>NO</b>	<b>Name of Competition</b>	<b>Number of Contestants</b>
1	News Reading	47
2	Speech Contest	35
3	Standup Comedy	25
4	Presentation	35
	Total	142

Table 2. The Data of the Second ETC in 2015

<b>NO</b>	<b>Name of Competition</b>	<b>Number of Contestants</b>
1	News Reading	40
2	Speech Contest	30

3	Presentation	30
4	Singing Contest	31
	Total	131

Table 3. The Data of the Third ETC in 2016

<b>NO</b>	<b>Name of Competition</b>	<b>Number of Contestants</b>
1	News Reading	33
2	Speech Contest	35
3	Presentation	28
4	Singing Contest	39
	Total	135

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the observation and result of English Talent Competition (ETC) from the 1<sup>st</sup> in 2014, the 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2015 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2016 and the response of participants, it can be concluded that ETC can be an alternative program to motivate and encourage ESP students to learn and improve their English skills. The talents that can be explored are speech, reading news, singing English songs, ESP presentation, etc.

ESP teachers/practitioners should be creative in conducting English programs for ESP Students. There are many programs that can be implemented for ESP students besides English Talent Competition, they are Video Field Trip, English Learning Day, English Community, etc.

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