ENGLISH CONVERSATION CLASSES
AT SMA NEGERI 8 MALANG

Novika Purnama Sari, Utami Widiati
State University of Malang
E-mail: novikapurnamasari@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: This study aimed to describe the materials used in English Conversation Classes at SMA Negeri 8 Malang. It employed descriptive-case study design. There were 89 students from particular classes (X5, XI Science 2, XI Social Studies 5) selected as the subjects of this research. School documents, interview guides, and questionnaires were used to collect the data. The result of the data analysis showed that there was a specific framework used to develop the materials. The finding showed that the materials used in English conversation classes were developed by topic-based framework; they were science-based and social-based topics. The teacher from each grade conducted the evaluation of those materials, although no special meeting was held. The students’ opinions towards the materials used were generally positive. Most of them mentioned that they were useful for other related subjects at the school.

Keywords: English conversation classes, materials frameworks, evaluation.

The English Conversation Classes were special classes that focus on the development of speaking skill. It administered a special language environment where all students were expected to converse in English without being afraid of doing so.

Some previous findings discovered several components of English Conversation Classes. There were Fauzia (2007), Fitriningsih (2008), Aini (2009) Khoiriyah (2010), Azkiah (2011), and Rusdi (2011). The components they found were classroom activities, the teaching techniques applied, the problems dealt with, the facilities and media utilized and the materials used. In this present research, the researcher decided on investigating the materials used in English Conversation Classes. The reason why materials used should be investigated further is an appropriate material will lead to a suitable activity. If an appropriate activity was created, the objectives, the relevance and the needs as stated in the curriculum and syllabus would be achieved.

The materials used for English Conversation Classes were compelled to be good and well-founded. Good and well-founded materials of English Conversation Classes were materials that directly boost the students’ speaking ability. Therefore, the materials used in English Conversation Classes were actually speaking materials.

SMA Negeri 8 Malang has implemented English Conversation Classes since 1995. Therefore, it was considered as a competent school that should have developed English conversation class materials properly. Besides, this school has been the subject of research conducted by Fauzia (2007) who suggested to take one of the six elements of her findings and conduct an in-depth investigation about it. The six elements of her findings were the classroom activities, the teacher’s role, the materials used, the media used, the students’ speaking problems and the students’ efforts to overcome their speaking problems.

Another consideration to choose SMA Negeri 8 Malang was based on the informal coversation with one of the English conversation class teachers who
informed that the materials used in *SMA Negeri 8 Malang* were specifically on science-based materials. As a result, there had to be some significance of the materials used in English Conversation Classes program at *SMA Negeri 8 Malang* that should be found out.

One of related literatures discussing English Conversation Classes materials was found in Littlewood (1992). He gave some alternatives frameworks of materials for a speaking class, they were functional-structural organization, functional organization, and topic-based organization.

Functional-structural organization meant that the material was provided to the students whose knowledge about grammar was limited. It was intended that by using functional-structural organization material the students were able to learn grammatical knowledge and language functions.

Functional organization meant that the material was applied to students who had acquired basic understanding of grammar. Some kind of language functions were possible to be thought namely asking permission, giving reason, agreeing and disagreeing or persuading. Fachrurrazy (1993) provided some language functions to be introduced to the students. They were personal function which meant the ability to express about one-self; interpersonal function which was an ability to make social communication; referential function which meant an ability to talk about the environment and language; imaginative function which was an ability to create stories and directive function which was an ability to make request, to give suggestion or to convince other people.

Topic-based organization meant that the teachers must prepare some important topics that might be useful for the students. Then, the teachers could choose suitable language functions and linguistics aspects based on the chosen topics. Fachrurrazy (1993) suggested a sequence of topics for teaching speaking, as follows: (1) students’ self, (2) family or friends, (3) social activities, (4) culture, (5) custom and tradition, (6) nature, and (7) science and technology.

**METHOD**

The researcher conducted the study at *SMA Negeri 8 Malang* which was located at Jl. Veteran No. 37 Malang. There were ten classes of grade X, five classes of XI Science, and three classes of XI Social while this research was conducted in classes of grade X5, XI Science 2, and XI Social 3 which were chosen based on the teachers’ recommendation. The participants of English Conversation Classes were all students of grade X5, XI Science 2, and XI Social 3 that the total is 89 students. The subjects of the research included a number of parties, they were the school principal of *SMA Negeri 8 Malang* who was the controller and the manager of every activity in the school, the English Conversation Classes teachers of grade X5, XI Science 2, and XI Social 3 as the instructors of the program. For the convenience, teacher A would refer to the teacher of grade X5. Teacher B would refer to the teacher of grade XI Science 2. Teacher C would refer to the teacher of grade XI Social 3.

The researcher collected the data by interviewing English Conversation Classes teachers and the school principal, delivering questionnaires to the students at *SMA Negeri 8 Malang*, and observing the documents got from the teachers. After having the interview, the researcher crosssed and checked the answers. The researcher paraphrased and concluded specifically. The questionnaires were
collected and analyzed by grouping the same answers and calculating the percentage. The documents were used to see whether they were in line with the materials framework or not.

**FINDINGS**

English Conversation Classes at *SMA Negeri 8 Malang* have been established since 1995. At that time, the classes were treated as an extracurricular program which meant that it was optional and carried out not in the regular school hours. Then, in the early year of 2000, they were transformed as an intracurricular program. In the year of 2008, English Conversation Classes were conducted by having cooperation with one of international English course, but the school stopped the cooperation in 2010.

In the early year of 2011, the new headmaster created a new policy to hold an English Conversation Classes by using different concept of materials, that was the materials must be in line with the science and social topics. If it was the science classes, the materials should be science-based topics. On the other hand, if it was the social classes, the materials should be social-based topics.

**Materials Framework in Grade X**

The materials for grade X were basic vocabularies on general science-based topics. Teacher A, who joined *SMA Negeri 8 Malang* in 2011 believed that deciding the materials should be based on general science conceptual learning.

Teacher A mostly used Internet as the source for the materials. Moreover, Teacher A also used an international book bought from an online books store, that was “Gateway to Science: Vocabulary and Concepts by Tim Collins and Mary Jane”. Teacher A used the book as one of sources in teaching vocabularies in his English Conversation Classes.

Since the Teacher A was new and fresh graduated, he was still finding out the best way in developing a module. At this time, Teacher A mostly gave one or two pieces of papers as the materials in his English Conversation Classes. Teacher A planned to evaluate the materials start from the first year. Then, it would be used as a consideration for the second year. In the second year, Teacher A would reevaluate the materials whether it was good to be used or not. Then, in the third year, Teacher A would compile all suitable materials to be a module or textbook for students.

**Material Frameworks in Grade XI Science**

The materials of grade XI Science Classes were based on science topics. As *SMA Negeri 8 Malang* was RSBI, science subjects were partly taught by using English. Due to that, it was a good thing to teach English Conversation Classes by using science-based topics. Since there was not such science-based topic handbook in Indonesia, the teacher should search, develop, and find the materials himself.

Teacher B found science-based topics compilation of materials from the Internet and it consisted of twenty units that its unit had a science topic.

The module was actually developed by one of schools in Malaysia. After reviewing its content, teacher B decided to use it because it was applicable for students in *SMA Negeri 8 Malang*. Thus, teacher B was assured to use the module as the main material teaching in English Conversation Classes on the science classes’ students.
Besides using Internet as source of his teaching materials, teacher B also asked for additional science-based topics materials to one of English department lecturer from State University of Malang. Teacher B once was told that it was important if materials of English Conversation Classes were game-based. Therefore, teacher B always tried to arrange the materials as a game.

**Materials Framework in Grade XI Social Studies**

The materials of grade XII Social Classes mainly referred to social-based topics. Teacher C said that there was no specific rule in deciding the sub topics. The main thing was it should be able to be presented in the classes. It meant that the topics could be developed into students-centered instruction such as role-play, drama, debate, or group discussion.

The topics used are mostly about social problems among society, for instance divorce, corruption, drugs. In addition, the topics should also be related to other social subjects of regular classes. If the subject of history was discussing how Islam came to Indonesia, then the topic for the English Conversation Classes should be how Islam came to Indonesia also and the class activity would be a group discussion talking about that topic.

**Evaluation of English Conversation Classes Materials Used**

The evaluation of English Conversation Classes materials in *SMA Negeri 8 Malang* generally was handled by the teachers itself. There was no special meeting in evaluating the materials due to several reasons; English conversation classes materials based on science and social-based topics was a new concept so the teacher was still developing the materials, it was difficult to find a perfect time in evaluating the materials they have made. Therefore, the teachers evaluated the materials by using their own way. The details of how the teacher carried out the evaluation in each grade were described below.

**Grade X**

At this time, the evaluation of the English materials was undertaken by delivering questionnaires to the students. From the questionnaires, teacher A would know what and which materials that the students like. Teacher A believed that the main actors in English Conversation Classes were the students. Therefore, the students’ evaluation was worth more than anything else. On the other hand, teacher A planned to validate materials he used to other senior English teachers since an expert validation was another important thing to be conducted.

**Grade XI Science**

Teacher B directly evaluated the materials used in XI Science classes at the time he found clumsiness during the class activity. Usually, teacher B would ask the students’ opinion about today’s class material and activity. If the students’ response was positive, teacher B would reuse the materials in the other classes. Another barometer of measuring the effectiveness of the materials was the students’ scores. If the scores were mostly disappointing, teacher B would evaluate whether the materials were too difficult or not, they were not related to students’ background knowledge. So, teacher B would directly modify and change the materials when he found the tweaks.

**Grade XI Social Studies**

Teacher C evaluated the materials at the time she taught the class. If the materials were considered ineffective, teacher C would modify it. It was considered as ineffective if there was a topic that did not make the students speak.
Usually, there was different treatment from one class to another class. The materials applied usually were incorporated to the students’ background knowledge of a particular class.

Teacher C also evaluated the materials by discussing the materials with other English teachers in SMA Negeri 8 Malang. Although it was mostly a non-formal discussion, this kind of discussion was usually effective.

**The Students’ Opinion toward the Materials Used**

The students’ opinion toward the materials used in English Conversation Classes was gathered by delivering questionnaires consisted of six question items. The total samples from X5, XI Science 2, XI Social 3 were 89 students. 32 students were from X5, 30 students were from XI science 2, and 26 students were from XI Social 3.

Questionnaire item number 1 indicated students general opinion of the materials used in English Conversation Classes whether they liked it or not. The percentage of students who very liked the materials were 9.38% for grade X, 56.67% for grade XI Science, 57.69% for grade XI Social.

Questionnaire item number 2 indicated students general opinion of the materials used in English Conversation Classes whether it was interesting or not. The percentage of students who said that the materials are always interesting were 3.13% for grade X, 16.67% for grade XI Science, 57.69% for grade XI Social.

Questionnaire item number 3 indicated students perception on the benefit of materials taught related to their daily life. The percentage that the materials were very useful are 6.25% for grade X, 20.00% for grade XI Science, 57.69% for grade XI Social.

Questionnaire item number 4 showed students’ perception on the benefit of materials taught related to other related subjects at school. The result was most of the students said that it is useful.

Questionnaire item number 5 was an open-ended question asking about the students’ opinion toward the materials that were expected. In grade X, most of the students answered that the materials should not only in the class but also an outdoor class or activity. In Grade XI Science, the students mostly wished that the materials hold in the laboratories or other places related to science. In Grade XI Social, the students mostly were satisfied with the materials they already have.

Questionnaire item number 6 was an open-ended question asking what kind of materials that they liked the most or they wished to be used. In grade X, most of the students answered that the materials which are taught or learnt by using movie as the teaching and learning media. In Grade XI Science, the students said that the materials they liked the most is the materials which is related to science subjects such as biology. In Grade XI Social, the students loved to have the materials that are packed as a drama performance.

**DISCUSSIONS**

English Conversation Classes at SMA Negeri 8 Malang have been established since 1995. It was considered as the first senior high school in Malang that conducted English Conversation Classes. At that time, the classes were treated as an extracurricular program. Then, in the early year of 2000, they were transformed as an intracurricular program. In the year of 2008, English Conversation Classes were conducted by having cooperation with one of
international English courses; it was English First (EF). English First (EF) gave and taught the students by providing some native speakers. Providing some native speakers to teach SMA Negeri 8 Malang students led into an expensive expenditure of the school. In addition, the school felt that the result of the teaching from EF did not really live up to the school expectation. Therefore, the school stopped the cooperation in 2010. As stated in Merino (1997), native speakers teachers did not always better than non-native speakers teachers. Actually non-native speakers teachers had some advantages which should be taken into account. One of the advantages was the non-native speaker teacher would be able to compare well the differences between the native language and the language learnt.

Materials Framework in Grade X

The materials for grade X were basic vocabularies on general science-based topics. Teacher A, who joined SMA Negeri 8 Malang in 2011 believed that deciding the materials should be based on general science conceptual learning. Wiig (1999) stated in his working paper that individual need to possess and command requisite knowledge to be able to act intelligently, be it in learning situations as students or apprentices, or as knowledge workers within an organization. They needed to be provided with a combination of conceptual knowledge and detailed factual knowledge. The conceptual knowledge they must have access to within their minds could be complemented with relevant factual knowledge that could be obtained readily whenever specific situations were addressed. Consequently with the theory above, the principle of the teacher was good to be applied.

Material Frameworks in Grade XI Science

The materials of grade XI Science Classes were based on science topics. As SMA Negeri 8 Malang was RSBI, science subjects were partly taught by using English. Due to that, it was a good thing to teach English Conversation Classes by using science-based topics. Since there was not such science-based topic handbook in Indonesia, the teacher should search, develop, and find the materials himself. Teacher B found science-based topics compilation of materials from the Internet and it consisted of twenty units that its unit has a science topic. Besides using Internet as source of his teaching materials, teacher B also asked for additional science-based topics materials to one of English department lecturer from State University of Malang. Teacher B once was told that it is important if materials of English Conversation Classes are game-based. Therefore, teacher B always tried to arrange the materials as a game. Teed (2010) stated that game-based learning in fact make science more fun, motivate students to learn, immerses the students in the material so they learn more effectively, encourage the students to learn from their mistakes.

Materials Framework in Grade XI Social Studies

The materials of grade XII Social Classes mainly refered to social-based topics. Teacher C said that there is no specific rule in deciding the sub topics. The main thing was it should be able to be presented in the classes. It meant that the topics could be developed into students-centered instruction such as role-play, drama, debate, or group discussion.
Student-centered instruction [SCI] was an instructional approach in which students influenced the content, activities, materials, and pace of learning. This learning model placed the student (learner) in the center of the learning process. The instructor provided students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively.

The SCI approach included such techniques as substituting active learning experiences for lectures, assigning open-ended problems and problems requiring critical or creative thinking that could not be solved by following text examples, involving students in simulations and role plays, and using self-paced and/or cooperative (team-based) learning. Properly implemented SCI could lead to increased motivation to learn, greater retention of knowledge, deeper understanding, and more positive attitudes towards the subject being taught (Collins & O’Brien, 2003).

**Evaluation of English Conversation Classes Materials Used**

The evaluation of English Conversation Classes materials in SMA Negeri 8 Malang generally was handled by the teachers itself. There was no special meeting in evaluating the materials due to several reasons; English conversation classes materials based on science and social-based topics was a new concept so the teacher was still developing the materials, it was difficult to find a perfect time in evaluating the materials they had made. Therefore, the teachers evaluated the materials by using their own way.

**CONCLUSION NAD SUGGESTION**

**Conclusions**

The materials used in English Conversation Classes were developed based on topic-based framework. There were two kinds of topics; science and social topics. Science-based topics were used for science classes, while social-based topics were used for social classes. The English Conversation Classes’ teachers from each grade mostly developed the materials by compiling topics from the Internet.

The teachers themselves generally handled the evaluation of the English Conversation Classes materials in SMA Negeri 8 Malang. English Conversation Classes materials which were based on science and social-based topics were a new concept so the teacher was still developing the materials and it was difficult to find the perfect time in evaluating the materials they had made.

**Suggestions**

This study found several things that would like to be suggested to the teachers of English Conversation Classes and the future researchers.

First, it will be better if the teacher decide a fixed handbook for the students. It is suggested that the English Conversation Classes teachers hold a workshop to compile materials as a handbook for each grade. By using the materials compilation that has been discussed together, it makes the teachers easier and directed in teaching the students.

Second, other researchers might carry out a research related to the validity and reliability of the materials used in English Conversation Classes. By observing the validity and reliability of the materials, it will be shown whether the materials are already perfect or not.
REFERENCES


