Incorporating English for Da'wah to Foster Students' English Skills in Da'wah Dissemination: A Self-Narrative Inquiry Study

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ABSTRACT

English is regarded as an international language used by people in communication including in delivering da'wah messages. In fact, in the Indonesian context, English teaching particularly for students in the da'wah field has not been implemented well. One of the factors is the lack of English resources on Islamic values and da'wah in English language teaching. The present study explores the need of incorporating English for da'wah to teach English in the Da'wah Management study program to foster English skills among students in da'wah dissemination and their professional career development through my teaching personal experience. Using narrative inquiry research, I would like to explore my personal teaching experience in teaching English to students in the da'wah management study program. The stories include my teaching practices from 2021 until 2022 which describe the need of incorporating Islamic da'wah materials into English language teaching. In revealing my stories, I pinpoint some benefits and challenges in incorporating Islamic da'wah materials into English language teaching to illustrate my personal teaching reflection. In addition, I promote a reflection on how to adopt da'wah materials into English class by considering teaching methods, strategies, and material design. The reflection is expected to offer a reference for educators in teaching English to students in the da'wah department.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of English as an international language has been already been known by people around the world. Regarding the function of English, it is used for communication including in disseminating messages and da'wah. Dealing with the development of technology in the digital era, English may have a great role in da'wah dissemination around the world. Murthado (2017) in his study revealed that da'wah could be described as a way to convey appropriate teachings and Islamic values to others. In the last few decades, da'i or preachers are conveying messages of da'wah through traditional media like face-to-face method. As the times go, the method of da'wah has already been shifted in this digital era especially using social media and other platforms from the internet. In other words, internet could function as a main of delivering Islamic teaching or da'wah in online ways. This means an online method

has functioned to disseminate Islamic preaching in a wider context (Shan-a-alahi & Huda, 2017).

In responding it, the role of English skills is badly crucial in fostering da'wah dissemination in broader ways. Moreover, people who deliver da'wah or called da'I are respectively enhanced to acquire English speaking proficiency inasmuch as it plays a main role in conveying thought and messages throughout the world. In fact, it is not be very easy for students from the non-English major in acquiring speaking skill since there are a number of aspects that should be taken for granted including pronunciation, intonation, stress, fluency and so on. In line with the challenges in speaking English, Gan (2012) and Wahyuningsih & Afandi (2020) assert that some common problems faced by students in speaking English cover inappropriate vocabularies, structure, inadequate intonation and pronunciation, lack of exposure, and poor input outside. In terms of accessibility of English materials dealing with da'wah, students need to acquire reading skill in English references. They are also demanded to have techniques in reading like skimming and scanning. In this sense, it takes process in getting adjusted with English literacies. Therefore, this kind of reading skill should be taught in English class particularly for those in da'wah department.

Previous studies in accordance with the importance of teaching English for students especially in non-English majors have been undertaken by some scholars. Alhamdan et al., (2017) investigate the discourse practices of the English universality as education policies of Saudi Arabian context as a way of giving an insight of English among students. In line with the English teaching method, Dougherty & Coelho (2017) pinpoint that e-portfolios could be used as a method in teaching English for students in Arabian higher educations since this kind of e-portfolio has meaningful ways in meeting the students' need in the digital era. In addition, dealing with the challenges of teaching English for students from non-English majors, Elyas & Al Grigi (2014) elaborate some obstacles to teaching English in Saudi Arabian Public schools viewed from teachers' and supervisors' perspectives. The obstacles include lack of training programs, low motivation among students, monotonous teaching methods, lack of school facilities and others. In terms of English as media to deliver communication throughout the world, Vincent (2016) reports that English has played a main role in building international diplomacy and other activities including da'wah. Besides, Ghafar et al. (2009) assert the importance of managing knowledge in conveying da'wah or other businesses.

Unlike the previous studies reporting the role of English as a main tool in communication around the world commonly, the present study focuses on deeply explore my teaching personal experience regarding the need of incorporating English for da'wah to foster students' English skills in disseminating da'wah using a self-narrative inquiry study. In this matter, I would like to narrate my experience on how to incorporate English for students in da'wah major including selecting English materials and teaching method.

METHOD

The present study adopted a narrative inquiry study based on a personal teaching experience. As reported by Creswell (2012), narrative study emphasizes on uncovering stories on individual experience. It is also strengthened by Clandinin (2006) advocating the narrative

inquiry as a way of narrating the human experience to build personal stories. Thus, the present study aims to share my personal teaching experience on the need of incorporating English for da'wah in disseminating da'wah for students from the non-English major at one of Indonesian higher educations from 2021 to 2022 to reflect and improve my English teaching. Data were collected through an observation and semi-structured interviews. Observation was done by having a review of classroom interaction and activities in English class. Moreover, three male students were recruited as participants categorized as S1, S2, and S3 to confirm their perception toward the need of incorporating English for da'wah in English class. The data were then analysed using a qualitative analysis to emphasize the teaching experience reflection as lesson learned from the past teaching experience.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

English Teaching Reflection

The finding of the study is a reflection of 2-year personal experiences in incorporating English for da'wah in da'wah department. The reflection provides meaningful insights on my teaching professional development including getting up to date toward teaching English for students from non-English major especially da'wah department, fostering my teaching competence and evaluating students' need. Reflecting on my teaching experience, I learned that teaching English for students from the non-native need a better preparation including the selection of appropriate English materials and teaching method in relation to certain fields or subjects. With regard to teaching English for students in da'wah field, I had a chronological activity in teaching English since 2021 to 2022. My first experience teaching English for students from the non-English major especially da'wah field begins in 2021. Before that, I had been teaching English only for students from English education department. This is surely different from teaching English in da'wah major in which students have limited English educational background. At first, I found difficulties teaching English for students of da'wah major since there is no a fixed lesson plan of English for da'wah students in da'wah major. In this sense, the contain of English lesson plan has not fulfilled the ultimate English competency for students. In fact, the English materials more focuses on the use of grammar or structure and theories of English. Meanwhile, other aspects of English skill such as listening, speaking and writing have not been explored in the lesson plan. Besides, the selected English materials has not been in line with Islamic da'wah meaning that most materials are dealt with English text generally. Therefore, I need to redesign the lesson plan of English for student in da'wah field including the selection of appropriate English materials, various teaching methods, strategies, media, and evaluation. This is strengthened by the Ma (2019) reporting that providing meaningful knowledge and advanced literacies in teaching English are badly crucial in order to meet students' need.

After teaching English for students in da'wah major in 2021, I tried to have my teaching personal reflection. I realize that it may not be very easy to teach English for them. Some of them felt difficult in speaking English. Indeed, they encounter some challenges dealing with speaking English including lack of exposure in using English, lack of appropriate pronunciation, lack of confidence and others. This is in line with the finding of study undertaken by Wahyuningsih & Afandi (2020) that some problems faced by students in speaking English include lack of confidence, lack of exposure, inappropriate vocabularies and so on. In terms of reading skill, students have difficulties in gaining more understanding

regarding the content of English text since the materials were not related to Islamic teaching or da'wah and the content was based on general English texts. Meanwhile, in terms of writing skill, students were just learning the basic things related to the use of grammar and simple sentences. In terms of listening skills, they were rarely gaining listening materials in English class.

The elaborations above illustrate that my personal teaching experience in English for students of da'wah major in 2021 have not ultimately covered all aspects of English skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing. Learning from the experience, I did a teaching reflection and find strategies in teaching English for students in da'wah field. There were several stages in accomplishing this including a) preparing various teaching methods that are considerably suitable for da'wah students; b) enriching advanced literacies related to da'wah major by reading some article journal in Islamic field; c) selecting and choosing the appropriate English material that cover da'wah and Islamic teaching; d) making use of technology in English teaching to foster students' interest; e) conducting appropriate assessment and feedback on students' works f) providing appropriate evaluations in English class.

Dealing with preparing teaching methods, I found some teaching methods that I could practice in my English class including outdoor activities, role play, presentation, discussion, project-based learning and so forth. In enriching my knowledge, I read many advanced English literacies especially related to Islamic and da'wah field. Indeed, it may take more time. Afterwards, I decided to choose the materials from journal that is in accordance with da'wh field. Then, I also integrate my teaching using technology, internet, social media to enhance students' learning. This could be done by pursuing them to create a video of preaching or delivering Islamic teaching using English. In addition, students can upload their videos into social media like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and so on. In this sense, the students' works or assignments have been assessed so that the students' will get more information about the result of their works. Interestingly, I also provided some feedback towards the students' works since it was a part of teaching activities. Finally, I gave some evaluations in my English class to know what aspects I need to improve for creating better quality in teaching English for students in da'wah field.

The above stages are actually in line with some studies conducted by many scholars. Obara & Sloan (2010), for instance, reported that teachers are highly recommended to explore standard curriculum including lesson plan, selecting better materials, and having a professional development by joining workshop and training, and making use of technology in teaching. Moreover, in order to support the English skills among students particularly speaking, the teachers or lecturers are suggested to provide dialogue using English through teaching activities like small-group discussion and exploratory dialogue (Makgato, 2015). In more detail, technology plays a crucial role for creating Islamic literature easily accessible and disseminating da'wah and Islamic teaching throughout the world (Hosseini et al., 2014; Wahyuningsih, 2018, 2021; Wahyuningsih & Dewi, 2019). Consequently, lecturers or educators should have positive response toward the use of technology in education. As advocated by Chiu et al. (2021), educators should be able to improve their competence continuously for the sake of meeting students' need and giving more chance for feedbacks and evaluation.

Reflecting on my personal teaching experience, I begin teaching English for students in da'wah field using a modified English lesson plan in 2022 that I have redesigned as a reflection of my previous teaching experience. With regard to this, I felt there is an improvement of my English teaching in da'wah field. Indeed, students are easily getting involved in my class since I use some teaching methods to foster their interest in learning English. Surprisingly, they are motivated to speak English through simple activities like creating a video in English. In fostering the reading skill, they could gain more understanding the English text since the materials are related to their major or field, da'wah and Islamic teaching. These elaborations were evidenced by the following excerpts reported by some students in da'wah field:

S1: *In my opinion, learning English is not easy considering that I am not students in English department. My major is da'wah management. I think learning English is important. By joining English class, I can learn speak English so that I can disseminate da'wah using English. I can use technology in supporting my class, and I can understand the materials since the texts are simple and in line with da'wah* (Student 1, 2022).

S2: *English is so crucial for me although I come from da'wah major. I just realize that through the acquisition of English, I can spread Islamic teaching around the world. Therefore, I am interested in learning English. In my English class, the lecturer has provided some materials related to my da'wah field presented in clear ways so that I could understand the messages. I could also create a video using English when I deliver my da'wah and upload it into social media like YouTube* (Student 2, 2022).

S3: *In my English class, my lecturer has asked us to enrich our literacies by reading English sources from internet, book and so on. I was asked to listen English videos from YouTube to enhance my listening skills. During the teaching process, various teaching methods were adopted by my lecturers* (Student 3, 2022).

As a result, conducting a teaching reflection has played an essential role in enhancing lifelong learning among students and developing educators' competence and quality simultaneously as realization of teaching professional development for a better future.

The Implication of Reflection for Future Teaching Development

The implication of having a personal teaching experience is that as an educator, I need to continuously improve my English teaching competence through several efforts including taking part workshop and training associated with English teaching such as strategies, approaches and methods, enriching advanced literacies through reading journal articles, fostering students' motivation in learning English, designing a better English class by writing a handbook of English for students in da'wah field associated with a better lesson plan as their references. Simply speaking, this reflection has led me to have a better motivation in teaching English particularly for those in da'wah major. As asserted by Alizadeh & Branch (2016), motivation is a crucial aspect in foreign language learning since it determines the success or failure in accomplishing the task. This description is strengthened by Saqlain (2014) reporting that motivation has a contribution for the success of second language acquisition.

Another implication of my teaching personal experience is that it is essential to enhance a learning community to create more experiences in learning English. Indeed, experience promotes us to build our identity and produce an insightful learning. In this matter, I learnt a lot from my teaching experiences for students' in da'wah major. Previously, I found difficulties adopting materials associated in teaching English for the students in da'wah major. Afterwards, I tried to learn many things that should be improved in my English class. One of them is selecting the appropriate English materials dealing with da'wah or Islamic teaching so that the students could easily gain understanding towards English texts. More importantly, they could practice their English skills in disseminating da'wah. As I explored before, I also learnt some teaching methods and strategies that can be applied in my English class and tried to integrate my English class to the use of technology. Further, educators or lecturers need to ask for students' responses towards our teaching activities whether it has fulfilled the students' need or not. Thus, it could be an evaluation for us to make a better improvement in teaching and learning process. Finally, educators or lecturers should continuously develop their teaching competence and never stop learning for a better future development.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on my teaching experience in incorporating English for da'wah, I realize my role as an educator or lecturer. An educator or lecturer is not just explaining materials and assessing the students' work. Indeed, we have to ensure that we have explained to students is meaningful for them. Importantly, it should meet the students' need in learning English. This could be achieved by creating an appropriate instructional design through incorporating English for da'wah in English class. One of my desires is to create a handbook of English for da'wah that could be used as references in teaching English. Hopefully, I could finish the book soon. One more important thing, I do hope that what I can deliver to my students can be beneficial for them particularly in disseminating da'wah throughout the world. Finally, the implication of the study is that the need of improving the quality of teaching and upgrading knowledge for a future teaching development.

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