Issues of Teaching English for Lecturers of Non-English Department: A Narrative Exploration on Teaching Experience

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**Abstract**

The research aims to explore the experiences of TOEFL tutors who teach non-English department lecturers. The theoretical framework in this study is Teaching English, English proficiency, and learning challenges. The type of research is qualitative. The approach that is used in this research is a case study because this research focuses on a particular case and it is the narrative experience of two lecturers lecturing lecturers from non-English departments. The data in this research are statements taken from FGD (Forum Group Discussion). The source of data is the transcripts of the interview. There are two lecturers, who specialized in English Proficiency, interviewed in the FGD. They are from the English language Education department at a university in Surabaya. All participants are non-English department lecturers. The analysis technique used in this study is thematic. The results elucidate that there are three factors of difficulties that have been summarized as narrative experiences for TOEFL tutors when teaching lecturers from non-English departments. The difficulties in teaching TOEFL for lecturers of non-English departments are caused by workload, time management, and lack of motivation.

**Keywords:** *Narrative Experience, Teaching English, & English Proficiency*

# INTRODUCTION

In general, everyone understands that English is the language of international communication so any distribution of information, if using English, will be more widely disseminated. In the context of this research, lecturers are the ones who are responsible for scientific renewal and they are required to be able to distribute their knowledge. The problem, teaching English to lecturers in non-English study programs is a challenging task that requires appropriate strategies and methods. One of the biggest challenges is finding the best and appropriate methods to teach these students who are intellectuals with extremely busy lives. Tutors are encouraged to be innovative in teaching strategies with a focus on results, as these English competencies are needed in many areas, for example for TOEFL which is a requirement for lecturer certification, giving lectures in international cooperation programs, or International Credit Transfer programs, publication of reputable or international articles, and even further studies either domestically or abroad. Competence in listening, reading, grammar, and even speaking in English is something that must be understood, to support career and professionalism (Afriani & Silvia, 2019; Agustina, 2014; Dwihartanti & Nur Faizah, 2019; Syukur & Nugraha, 2019; Titik Agustina, 2010).

In general, being a lecturer can be a very stressful job. Teaching is considered one of the hardest jobs in the world with significant long-term consequences. The job of teaching is very challenging and many facets of the job are beyond the control of the teacher, educator, or lecturer. This can lead to increased stress, anxiety and depression (Herman et al., 2020; Ramberg et al., 2020). It is important to have the skills to deliver material without the drama, but being a lecturer is not just about delivering material from a book, but interpreting knowledge as needed. Lecturers spend a lot of time doing this demanding job, so they are experts in their field but lack expertise in other fields. Moreover, during the pandemic, lecturers are asked to be more innovative and have good literacy in technology (Asyari & Rasidi, 2022).

Lecturers in non-English study programs often have a lack of background in English and often face various pressures that can affect their academic performance. Lecturers have to carry out Tri Dharma and one of the areas in it is the publication of scientific papers in reputable journals. Reputable journals indirectly demand that the writing must be in English, so this is a challenge in itself. In the end, they look for translators to translate their writings or invite colleagues who have good English skills. To support their welfare, lecturers are also expected to pass lecturer certification and one of the requirements is an English certificate, ranging from TOEFL ITP, IBT, TOEP, and even IELTS. There are many types of English proficiency tests, but all of them require test takers to have English skills, from listening, reading, writing, grammar, and so on.

For the record, The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is a globally renowned language assessment that verifies an individual's English language ability. Passing the TOEFL exam allows the certificate holder to prove their level of English and concretize it by showing the score on a professional CV. TOEFL is usually used for university programs, school enrolment either domestically or abroad, and also for employment. However, people can also take the TOEFL for other purposes, such as obtaining a work visa or seeking an internship or work placement abroad. TOEFL is an evaluation of people's ability to read, write, and listen. In addition, having the ability to speak English, allows us to study, work, or live with native English speakers. In short, if we want to enhance our professional experience and career, the TOEFL score is the ultimate passport That's why it's so important to get a good score on the TOEFL exam (Al-Musawi & Al-Ansari, 1999; Anamaria-Mirabela & Monica-Ariana, 2013, 2014; Ermawan et al., 2014; Ma & Cheng, 2016; Rahma et al., 2022).

The thing is, it was found that many of them (lecturers from non-English study programs) expressed strong anxiety that dominated optimism regarding English. They have a lot of extraordinary lecturer workloads, ranging from positions, committees, non-academic tasks, Tri Dharma, administration, publications and works, and many others. This means that understanding the background of these unnatural learners is certainly a note for English tutors.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to voice the challenges faced by English tutors who teach learners who have professions as lecturers from non-English study programs. The subjects of this study are lecturers or tutors who are contracted by the Language Centre to teach lecturers to have proficient English language skills. The competence can increase the probability of the lecturers improving and supporting their career and profession.

The novelty of this research can be seen from its comparison with research that explores the same field. There is a study written by Marzulina et al. (2021), entitled *Challenges in Teaching English for EFL Learners at Pesantren: Teachers’ Voices.* This study aims to investigate the difficulties faced by English teachers when instructing students in the language at Pesantren. Using a case study methodology, this research is qualitative in nature. Two English teachers from Pesantren participated in this study. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data gathered from observations and interviews to determine the difficulties teachers encounter when instructing English. The results indicate that there are five difficulties that English teachers encounter when instructing English: boosting student drive; 2) enhancing language proficiency; 3) handling packed classrooms; 4) managing time constraints; and 5) addressing the absence of facilities. There is also a discussion of the findings' ramifications.

The other research is a study written by Poedjiastutie et al. (2021), entitled *Socio-cultural Challenges of English Teaching in Remote Areas of Indonesia*. This research elucidates the interconnectedness between the advancement of English language acquisition and the socio-cultural background of a certain country. Learning is influenced by the social, historical, economic, political, and cultural aspects of the context. Poedjiastutie et al.'s study seeks to investigate the socio-cultural obstacles encountered in teaching English in a geographically isolated region, namely on Pemana Island in East Nusa Tenggara. The researchers employ anthropological inquiry as their methodology. Pemana is a designated site for the Indonesian government's educational initiative aimed at enhancing the standard of education and addressing the scarcity of instructors in rural regions. The plan entails the deployment of English language scholars to teach in border, distant, and poor regions. The difficulties in teaching and learning English might be attributed to socio-cultural factors. These factors encompass the community's economic circumstances, their attitudes toward English language instruction, and a curriculum that is incongruent with the prevailing social realities. Subsequently, the instructional implications are examined in this section.

Another research is the one written by Ristiani (2018), entitled *Challenges in Teaching English for the Deaf Students*. Ristiani clarified that English is a mandatory component of the educational curriculum in Indonesia. Deaf students are considered one of the categories of students with exceptional needs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Ristiani's study focuses on identifying the obstacles encountered by teachers instructing deaf children in English and developing solutions to address these issues, drawing on pertinent theories and prior research. The study reveals that educators encounter numerous obstacles when instructing hearing-impaired students, including capturing students' focus, comprehending lip movements for word recognition, providing definitions and illustrations, differentiating similar words in varying contexts, and presenting content aligned with students' existing knowledge. Effective strategies for addressing these issues include instructing students to compile a dictionary, employing alphabetical indicators, and utilising physical cues such as waving or tapping to capture their attention. In addition, teaching English to deaf pupils necessitates the use of innovative and efficient instructional approaches, as well as highly skilled educators.

Of the three studies that have been presented, this study seems to show some newness. All teachers experience challenges, some teach in boarding schools, in remote areas, and also students with special needs. However, no research has been found that discusses lecturers who learn English because there is a perspective orientation that lecturers are considered to have qualified English competence, even though the fact is not always like that. This means that there are points here that can be explored regarding the teaching challenges of lecturers from non-English study departments.

# RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach, focusing on the narrative experiences of two English proficiency lecturers teaching non-English department lecturers. Data were collected through FGDs and analyzed thematically. The data in this research are statements taken from FGD (Forum Group Discussion), which is designed to get more information than just yes-or-no answers, especially to get the participants’ perspectives, experiences, and thoughts in detail. The source of data is the transcripts of the interview. There are two lecturers, who specialized in English Proficiency, were interviewed in the FGD. They are from the English language Education department at a university in Surabaya. All participants are non-English department lecturers. In this research context, the lecturers’ names are initialized with faked names: *X* and *Y*. There are three primary questions (A1-A3) which are developed with reactive and responsive questions (A1a-A3a) based on the interviewees’ answers: 1) Can you explain in detail about the difficulties you experienced in teaching TOEFL for lecturers? 2) Have you ever tried new strategies or methods to adjust the situation of the lecturer learners? 3) Why do they seem unmotivated to attend TOEFL training when it is important for them?

This research’s data collection technique is focus group discussions. The form of FGD employed in data gathering is Single Focus Group, which allows for an exploratory space to enhance data providing in the analysis. There are three stages to conducting FGDs: pre-activity, activity, and post-activity. During the pre-activity phase, the following were prepared: 1) determining the objectives, 2) developing a list of questions to lead the discussion, 3) recruiting discussion participants relevant to the topic, 4) scheduling and preparing the date, time, and location, as well as agreement, consent, and determination of the method for recording. Data collection consists of the following steps: 1) creation of the interview instrument (questions); 2) validation of the instrument with academics in the same field of study, ensuring that the data acquired is relevant to both the theory and the research issue. 3) communicating with subjects to determine the interview schedule, 4) conducting the interview, 5) transcribing the interview results, and 6) classifying data to eliminate redundant or irrelevant information.

On the other side, the analysis technique used in this study is thematic. It is employed because it adapts to the categorization of problems discovered throughout the data mining process, allowing data exploration to be tailored to the classified discoveries. Data analysis consists of the following steps: (1) data familiarisation; (2) data codification (numeration and subject name masking); (3) theme building; (4) theme verification; (5) theme definition at the start of each exploration section; and (6) analysis.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

## Findings

The study identified three primary challenges: workload, time management, and lack of motivation. These factors significantly impact the effectiveness of TOEFL instruction for non-English department lecturers.

From the first question, about the difficulties the lecturer (the tutor) experienced in teaching TOEFL for lecturers (of non-English departments), it can be known that workload becomes the pivotal issue to grasp. Tutor X said that in a class meeting, students complained that they could not think anymore, some said that they were tired of being a committee of activity, getting additional workloads, positions, and other obligations. This can be observed from Tutor X’s statement,

We struggle to teach, and they complain about the workload. Can you imagine? They are here at 3 pm, and many of them are late, some of them say they have activities A, B, and C, some of them have just taught a class, and some of them welcome guests [officials in the field of Cooperation], and so on. How can we focus on teaching if they complain about their own busy lives? I’m also a lecturer, I understand that that’s why I feel this is a big challenge for me (Tutor X, A1).

In this dialogue, Tutor Y added, “One aspect of learning is focus, and focus comes from accumulated energy. If their energy is about to run out, how can they focus?” (Tutor Y, A1). Here, the researcher responded, “Isn’t there a rule that says they can’t be late to maximize the learning process?” Tutor X replied, “Here we realize that they are Lecturers, the need for TOEFL is for their professional level, that’s why we can’t force them to do it if they also have obligations in other things” (Tutor X, A1a). In the same question, Tutor Y said something similar, “I don’t know who is at fault, this assignment is from the University, while the University provides more work for the students. Paradox” (Tutor Y, A1a). The researcher added a reactive question, “Are you a lecturers? That means you know what it's like to be them [learners]? If you are already a lecturer, is self-development difficult? Especially this TOEFL, something they need?” Tutor X replied, “We know how hard it is to be a lecturer with additional duties, but life must go on. If there is a facility like this [free TOEFL training], of course I will take it the first place” (Tutor X, A1b). Tutor Y also said something similar meaning, “talking about tiring, workload, fatigue, burnout, this would be endless. Everyone who works must be tired, but it all depends on how the person sets his *will* for his career goals” (Tutor Y, A1b). From these answers, it can be concluded that *workload* is the biggest difficulty in teaching TOEFL for lecturers who are not from the English department.

The second question, about new strategies or methods to adjust the situation of the lecturer learners, has resulted in the problem of using new strategies or methods to face the blockade of so-called, *time management*. Tutor X said, “... we tried quizzes, but they didn’t do it” (Tutor X, A2). The first strategy was to provide explanations and how to answer questions with certain types, but when it was changed to independent learning and directly to quiz questions, they were also unable to finish it. Tutor Y had a different answer but a similar nuance, “... in my class, I changed from lecture mode to cooperative and Problem-based strategies, but it didn’t work at all” (Tutor Y, A2). The researcher questioned why it did not work because it sounds so impossible if no various teaching strategies are to be implemented successfully. Tutor X replied that it was not about the teaching strategies, but rather their time, “... it seems like it’s not about the suitability of [teaching] strategies or methods, but rather time. They complain that there is no time to study. That is, they don’t bring insights from self-study before entering the class” (Tutor X, A2a). Tutor Y reacted in a similar vein, “Yes, that’s the way it is. Are they unable to manage their time? I don’t think so. They don’t have time, or they run out of time. This training should be effective for those who are not in the office, not in the committee, or lecturers who only teach and are not busy with other additional tasks” (Tutor Y, A2a). From the answers above, it can be concluded that time management issue becomes an obstacle to the various strategies applied by the tutors to the learners who are lecturers with various busy schedules.

The third question, about demotivation to attend and learn TOEFL training although it is important for them, results in a compilation situation of the two previous main questions. It is not just about workload and time management, but its consequence turns out to be the discouragement to level up their career. TOEFL can be a path to escalate their career because its certificate is impactful and required. Tutor X used to provide a sharing section about the importance of having TOEFL certification and how it is useful for their professional career. However, the answer seems to strip off the complicated situation. Tutor X stated, “... once I got an answer that they feel English is their weakness, of course, I motivate them, but they still affirm that they can’t speak English, that’s why they don’t become English lecturers” (Tutor X, A3). Meanwhile, Tutor Y also shared his experience, “... I even heard that they feel how to graduate without going through this [training] process. They think pragmatically. The purpose is for the files and requirements for lecturer professional certification, they feel they don’t need to be able to speak English, they just need the certificate” (Tutor Y, A3). The researcher was triggered to question that as a lecturer, they have to write a journal, and if the journal is at an international level, they should be able to do English. Tutor X said, “I once said the same thing, but they replied dismissively that they have *Google Translator*, *AI* [Artificial Intelligence], and the funny thing is, they ask the University Language Centre to help them solve problems related to English” (Tutor X, A3a). The researcher asked, “How can they think like that?” Tutor X said, “Easy. I know who they are and what they think. Make it simple. The important thing is that their professionalism level goes, raising salaries, and doing professionalism, and it is not English” (Tutor X, A3b). Here, Tutor Y argued, “I think motivation depends on the intention of the individual. If they are satisfied with what they have and not challenged to be able to do more, then no matter how much effort we give, it will not be effective. Because the basis of learning is the will to be able” (Tutor Y, A3a). From the various answers related to the discussion of the third question, it can be concluded that the problems, which are overexposed barely throughout the discussion, pinpoint to the lack of motivation for the learners. With the lack of motivation, it finally transforms into part of a series of problems for the tutors. Moreover, the tutors also understand [*hesitate*] and cannot force the fact that these lecturers are also equal to them with the same busyness.

***Discussion***

The heavy workload and poor time management among lecturers result in limited focus and motivation for TOEFL training. Addressing these issues requires institutional support and tailored training programs. Workload refers to the fatigue and burnout experienced by the learners. Time Management refers to how the learners manage the time to study and to work. Lack of motivation refers to the baseline the reason, and the factor of how they learn.

At the first point, discussing about workload for learners can affect the problems to learn is actually a general point of view. Workload refers to the amount of work that a person is expected to perform. It can be viewed as a certain workload. Workload can refer to office work, schoolwork, or other duties. Ideally, the effort is measured and balanced. This means that the amount of work assigned is appropriate for the individual’s competence and may be done within a reasonable time. However, an excessive workload can cause a variety of problems, including stress, exhaustion, and decreased productivity.

In the context of this research, workload refers to the numerous supplementary tasks that learners are required to complete outside of the class, which leads to suboptimal learning outcomes. Workload, in essence, refers to the quantity of tasks and obligations that a student encounters within a specific timeframe. An appropriately calibrated and equitable workload can facilitate the attainment of optimal learning outcomes. Nevertheless, an overwhelming amount of work can profoundly hinder both academic performance and the overall well-being of students. The issue at hand is that the context is overwhelmed beyond the scope of learning. The learners are educators, and the educators' responsibilities are burdensome.

Basically, lecturers have an important role in the *Tri Dharma* of Higher Education, it refers to education, research, and community service. In addition to these three main tasks, lecturers are also faced with various additional workloads, including *Administration and Management*, *Self-Development* *and* *Professionalism*, and *Student Affairs and Development*. Administration and Management refers to activities such as filling in data and documents related to lectures (syllabus, RPS, and attendance list, attending lecturer meetings (both at the study programme, faculty, and university levels)), managing student assignments and exams, guiding scientific publication (students’ thesis, dissertation, journal articles, and books students), and taking care of various student administrative needs. Meanwhile, Self-development and Professionalism refers to the activities related to training and seminars to improve teaching and research skills, updating knowledge and expertise in the field of science, preparing professional organisation activities. On the other hand, Student Affair and Development refers to mentoring or supervising students, managing student activities (seminars, workshops, and community service), providing counselling and guidance to students who experience learning difficulties or personal problems. In addition to all that, lecturers must also contribute to the institution. Lecturers must carry out *ad-hoc* tasks assigned by the institution, such as being a member of the regulation drafting team or research proposal reviewer team, participating in institutional promotion and branding activities, and helping to improve the institution’s reputation and image in the community. In short, this workload can be a challenge for lecturers in balancing the main tasks of the *Tri Dharma* of Higher Education and other responsibilities. With this situation, the lectures are given many burdening works and obligation, the TOEFL training service for free seems nothing.

After knowing the duties and workload of lecturers, we are in an aptitude to realise one thing that being a lecturer is not as relaxed as general people imagine. Lecturers appear to be in a situation that they must endure to learn and levitate themselves while carrying out their obligations. If we look at the previous description, it can be seen that the workload of lecturers is so tightly dense. It pours the logical consequence, they run out of time to insert other activities. Tactlessly, these activities are very vital for their career escalation. There is a *paradox* of lecturers’ obligations as employees of the institution and lecturers as servants of the nation. As servants of the nation, lecturers must update their insights and knowledge because they are the *beacon* of knowledge sources. This knowledge is manifested in research and books, as well as seminars, that make information widely disseminated and even deconstructs the direction of education policy and curriculum. On the other hand, lecturers are also employees of the institution. Lecturers must serve and carry out their duties in accordance with contractual ties. Violating the dignity as an institutional employee means violating the code of ethics of professionalism. Herein lies the *dilemma*. They must develop so that the institution can benefit, but the excessive workload prevents them from developing. This is where the main problem of time management occurs. It is not about the lecturer’s competence to manage time, but the situation that makes the time drained by other activities that are charged and required to be carried out.

In a situation where the learner has a burden outside the classroom and time is consumed by activities outside of learning, this has a real impact on the motivation to learn. That is, motivation is corroded, intention is inevitably eroded. Motivation is a key factor that drives people to learn and achieve their academic goals. It greatly influences the quality of learning and the achievement of results. There are several factors that can influence learning motivation, including internal drive, learning environment and personal goals. Internal drive refers to motivation that comes from within the individual, such as curiosity, desire to achieve success and personal satisfaction. Meanwhile, the learning environment also plays an important role in encouraging motivation, including support from teachers, a conducive classroom atmosphere and social interaction with peers.

The importance of motivation in learning can also be seen in its impact on academic achievement. Numerous studies show that students who have high levels of motivation tend to achieve better learning outcomes than those who are less motivated. Strong motivation can also help students overcome challenges and obstacles in the learning process. However, learning motivation can also be affected by various factors, such as personal problems, lack of support, or lack of interest in the subject matter. Hence, it is crucial for educators and parents to comprehend the variables that impact pupils' motivation to learn and devise strategies to enhance it.

By understanding the importance of motivation in learning, we can create a learning environment that supports and motivates students to reach their full potential. This can be done through providing positive encouragement, relevant learning, and creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. As such, learning motivation plays a crucial role in shaping meaningful learning experiences and helping students reach academic peak point. Institutions should consider reducing non-academic workloads and providing flexible TOEFL training schedules to accommodate lecturers' busy timetables.

# CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

## Conclusion

In this discussion, three things have been summarised as narrative experiences for TOEFL tutors when teaching lecturers from non-English departments. The difficulties in teaching TOEFL for lecturers of non-English department are caused by workload, time management, and lack of motivation. The learners who are lecturers have difficulties because they have excessive workloads in the university, so this causes them to have no time to improve their TOEFL competence. Although the university provides free TOEFL training, this still cannot boost their motivation in learning TOEFL even though the certificate from TOEFL is crucial for their professional career path. The institution should provide a sort of structural or well-organized priority schedule of for the lecturers based on the need of English proficiency urgency.

## Suggestion

Teaching English is contextual and complex, because it is not just about how to make the students learn how to be able using English in proper way, but also matching to the purpose of their English skill. In this matter, teaching lecturers provides some situations and consequences because they use it in complex situation, from teaching, doing research, and diving in education horizon. Matching the material and the purpose of the students’ expectation can be a space to explore in teaching English.

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