Distance Learning Factors Needed for Foreign Language Teaching: Perspective of University Policy Makers

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Perspective of University Policy Makers

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Article Info

Abstract
This study aims to estimate the lecturers’ perspective on the Distance Learning Unit (Pendidikan Jarak Jauh Mata Kuliah – PJJ Makul). The implementation of this internet-based lecture can provide convenience and breadth of access for students, especially those constrained by the distance between residence/workplace and campus location. The respondents of this research will voluntarily involve Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa (UST) lecturers of Graduate English Education Department who play role as policy makers and have formulated a curriculum in which there are some Distance Learning Units. These units are planned to be implemented by the UST Graduate Education Directorate. The main consideration for the holding of these units is the difficulty of UST Postgraduate students, most of whom have worked as teachers and employees of institutions and have difficulty in time and distance to study in a classroom. Distance Learning Units held by the Graduate English Language Education Department are expected to be able to provide a partial solution to these problems for recent and prospective students.

Keywords: Distance Learning Units, English Language Education, perspective

Introduction

Education by using the internet today is increasingly needed by people who need access to education. The desire to gain knowledge is sometimes hampered by distance and time, as well as funds. Internet network gives an alternative problem solving related to this because of its flexibility and comfort (Wynants & Dennis, 2018). UST students or prospective students who have worked may highly expect flexibility as offered by the online teaching system. This need is realized by the Ministry of Research and Higher Education so that regulation of the Minister of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 51 Year 2018 (Kementerian Riset Teknologi dan Pendidikan Tinggi Republik Indonesia, 2018) in which governing the organizing of distance education. Considering this, distance education can be seen as an alternative teaching method that needs to be applied throughout this method according to the needs of students or prospective students. In the 21st century, this teaching method became a necessity.

Graduate Study Program of English Language Education is aware of the need for development of distance learning program in the Distance Learning Unit (Pendidikan Jarak Jauh Mata Kuliah – PJJ Makul). In the early stages, the lecture perspectives need to be considered because they will directly implement this program. This consideration is based on the realization that institutions and students need preparation to support this education system. Although previous research has shown advantages of distance education or teaching with online systems (Kelling, Goswami, & Kelling, 2019; Wynants & Dennis, 2018), an analysis of the lecturers’ perspective need to be organized as part of a need analysis.

There are two terms that have the proximity of meaning of the approximate needs/needs Assessment and requirement analysis. Approximate needs or needs assessment is an attempt to estimate the existence of deficiencies (Royse, Staton-Tindall, Badger, & Webster, 2009). The statement also implies that necessity analysis is an analysis of the gaps found. Another definition looks at the expected need/needs Assessment and analysis of needs/needs Analysis as the same thing (Zhang, 2018). In addition, the need analysis is also defined as a process of gathering information about learners’ needs and how those needs are managed (Richards, 2001). In this definition it is implied that the process of collecting information is continued with the analysis process to be able
to manage the needs found. Therefore, this research seeks to find the factors needed in managing a distance learning and how do the factors work. This focuses on the discourse of distance learning unit implementation which defines as distance learning for less than 50% units provided by the Graduate English Language Education Department. This department provides thirteen units so that

**Research questions**
This research will focus on analyzing the needs of this program with the following problems.
1. What are the factors needed in managing a distance learning?
2. How do the research subjects perceive distance learning portrayed in the way the factors interrelated?

**Method**
The Data in this study was a discourse taken from an interview with a lecturer, and an Internet-related subject at UST. The implementation of the interview is based on the Typology Bradshaw (Royse et al., 2009): consisting of four types of approximate needs namely normative needs, expressed needs, perceived needs, and comparative needs.

Normative needs are defined by experts or influential people in a community. The expressed needs are based on testing on service request from the program user. The felt-needs associated with the effort to inquire directly with the user what they believe or feel about their needs. This method is the most capable of capturing the user's view. Comparative need aims to seek out the characteristics of those who get the service of a program and look for characteristics in other populations and estimate a number of unnecessary obstacles.

Out of the four estimates of the requirement, this research will see the felt-needs because it can be more thorough and directly describing the needs of the user, namely the institution (as a maintainer), lecturers, and students. The research focuses on analysis of needs from a lecturer's point of view as a teacher or a distance education class facilitator.

To obtain the felt-needs of research subjects, data that is perspective or view of the subjects of the study was taken from an interview with the lecturer. The proposed Interview question is an open question related to distance learning so that researchers do not direct the subject of research on the researchers' thinking framework. The need analysis in this study will look for gaps that indicate subject needs

Collected data will be analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016) where the discourse in the form of research/user subjects will be classified into themes and sub-themes to see the view map of the subjects’ needs. The Thematic Analysis steps consist of six steps as in Figure 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Stage 5</th>
<th>Stage 6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiarizing</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Seeking for</td>
<td>Reviewing the</td>
<td>Defining</td>
<td>Writing up</td>
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<td>with the data</td>
<td>initial code</td>
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<td>themes</td>
<td>themes</td>
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Figure 1 Six stages of thematic analysis (*Braun & Clarke, 2006*)
Results and Discussion

Based on the interview of the Masters in English Language education program, where the distance learning unit will be conducted, there are several themes related to lecturers’ perspective on distance learning and the readiness with the distance learning.

Table 1 Themes dan sub-themes from the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>1. The Minister of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 51 Year 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>The UST Academic Regulations 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution internet culture</td>
<td>Custom of the academic staff and students on internet based teaching-learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human ressource</td>
<td>Administration staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching materials/modules</td>
<td>Online teaching materials/modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access</td>
<td>Hardware/ software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Learning assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality control</td>
<td>Evaluation on the teaching learning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UST academic Portal</td>
<td>Portal provided by the university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the themes and sub-themes that emerged in the interviews. The eight themes are the perception of the subjects to see how distance learning should be implemented. These themes are in their allotence related to other themes as outlined in the following sections.

Regulation

Regulation of the government that is a reference in the implementation of distance education is regulation of the Minister of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 51 Year 2018 on establishment, change, dissolution of state universities, and the establishment, amendment, revocation of private universities, Chapter VII. Organizing Distance Learning (PJJ).

Article 1 mentions the characteristics of a distance learning as follow.
A. Open;
B. self-study;
C. learn anywhere and anytime; and
D. based on information and communication technology.

With these characteristics, the implementation of distance learning should refer to the article. This has been addressed by Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa by issuing the UST Academic Regulations 2019. Chapter 8 Learning management Articles 7 to 9 of this regulation mention about learning using the Internet including the distance learning in which the implementation is required to follow the prevailing regulations in this case the regulation of the Minister of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 51 Year 2018.

Institution internet culture

Working culture in institutions will certainly color the activities and performance of the institution. In the interviews, a theme appears that mentions institutional culture in the use of internet. In this study, institutional internet culture covers the habit of using the internet in particular for learning. Not all lecturers and students,
particularly the senior ones, are familiar with the using of internet for teaching. This situation can be the challenge of distance learning implementation.

**Human resources**

The human resources that appear as themes in the interviews include administrative staff who are specialized in handling distance learning (PJJ), lecturers, and students who have sufficient computer and internet literacy. The administration staff has a duty to be the staff that monitors the implementation of the PJJ and is also able to run functions as a help desk. This staff is tasked to assist in online learning implementation, for example answering questions from students about assignments submission and or schedules. Lecturers and students are supposed to be able to use computer well and simply know how the computer application works. Students need to be independent learners in order to follow and achieve the learning objectives well. Modules/materials that exist online facilities should be studied in a discipline because students are not directly under the lecturer's observation. Timeliness in the collection of structured tasks should be addressed by the discipline as well.

**Teaching materials/modules**

Modules/materials used for online should be supporting the characteristics of the PJJ as stated in the regulation. For the purposes of online learning, the module should be able to support self-learning where students have the awareness of learning obligations with self-governed learning time by the students concerned. Students can access learning materials in the module anytime and anywhere so that the form of the online module must be able to give instructions and delivery of the content clearly. This suggests that lecturers need to prepare materials more closely and may take more time than material for face-to-face classroom. Lecturers need to consider the level of difficulty in creating online learning materials due to the challenges of indirect communication.

**Internet access**

In the interviews, there are two opinions stating that Internet access today should not be a problem in the context of Indonesia. The other opinion states that there are some areas that still have constraints in the wave of telecommunication signal waves so that internet activities for PJJ must be constrained. Data interviews also stated that Internet bandwidth capacity and PJJ equipment at Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa University is sufficient to host the PJJ. Thus, it is necessary to ensure bandwidth or Internet capacity owned by learners having sufficient capacity to run PJJ.

**Assessment**

Assessment to ensure the success of the learning process requires assessment instruments and appropriate methods in accordance with the nature of the lecture. Assessments should be able to measure each individual learner so that it is necessary to ensure that the intended learners are involved in the assessment process and not others. This assessment can also be used as a successful measurement of program implementation as an evaluation.

**Quality assurance**

Quality assurance of implementation of PJJ serves as a bodyguard of system quality, process, and learning assessment. This function is indispensable so that this more complex education service can be monitored and evaluated the process, its success, and its usefulness.

**Portal akademik UST – UST academic portal**

This theme is presented by all research subjects stating that Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa provides an academic Portal that can be used as a container of distance learning organized by the Directorate of Postgraduate Education English language education study Program. This has been elaborated in detail in the academic Portal: A guide for lecturers in which includes menus for lecture materials, coursework, discussion forums, and assessments. In this regard, the subjects strongly recommend the use of this academic portal. Applications that have been used by lecturers to teach online in accordance with the advice of academic rules can be linked and addressed in this portal.
From the description of each theme, the relationship between themes can be seen in Figure 2 below.

![Figure 2 Interrelated themes of distance learning](image)

**Conclusion**

This research found that there are eight factors in managing a distance learning unit which are (1) regulation, (2) institution internet culture, (3) human resources, (4) teaching materials/modules, (5) internet access, (6) assessment, (7) quality control, (8) UST academic portal. These factors are intertwined in nature which means Distance learning cannot be separated from the institution's culture in using the internet, thorough planning, and quality assurance to ascertain that this course can run well. The internet for some people is not encouraging but for those who can use it well can bring good results in the world of education (Elekaei & Tabrizi, 2019; James, 2014). The development of internet technology for teaching is inevitable therefore lecturers have to prepare and empower themselves to be able to provide long distance learning well. This also needs a thorough planning to achieve the best results (Picciano, 2015), besides, the attitude of the human resources in this department toward online learning contributes to the success of the program (Akbarov, 2018). Last but not least, in the context of teaching of foreign languages, online instruction can raise difficulties that must be anticipated (Nguyen, 2008).

**Acknowledgements or Notes**

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