THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEGOTIATED SYLLABUSES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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Abstract
A negotiated syllabus is a syllabus involving a negotiation between teachers and learners in a teaching and learning process. It is seen as a communicative approach in the current English Language Teaching era. This research is aimed to investigate the implementation of a negotiated syllabus in English language teaching at university level. It identifies in what activities the teachers commonly apply the negotiated syllabus. It also reveals the strengths and constraints faced during the implementation. This research used descriptive qualitative method. The data collection was carried out by interviews with 15 English teachers at university level in Semarang and Jakarta. The finding revealed that most teachers have learned a negotiated syllabus and some have applied it in their teaching and learning process. These activities were generally implemented in discussing topics, assignments, daily activities, types of mid/final test, projects, and assessment. The most strength is that the teachers can fulfil the students’ needs and wants, and the most constraint is the teachers are expected to be skillful and ready with new material plans and continuous evaluation. This study concludes that a negotiated syllabus is not quite familiar and frequently applied in English language teaching. However, it is hoped that it can be one of solutions to anticipate problems in English language teaching at university level.

Keywords: negotiated syllabus, university level, English, teacher

Introduction
The communicative era has given tremendous impacts to many areas of people’s live, including to the teaching and learning term. Recent years, some trends have been developing and shifting in the area of the language methods, teaching innovations, teaching materials, and so on. Those bring varieties and preferences in the process of English language teaching activities.

One of the examples also appears in the development of syllabus designs. A syllabus is the basic aspect in the teaching and learning process. It serves as a foundation that must be constantly maintained and implemented in order to achieve the goals in the teaching and learning process. So far, education system in Indonesia was based on the teacher-centered rather than learner-centered which means that the syllabus is always prepared for the learners. The students solely follow what are taught and instructed without involving their knowledge when designing it.

A phenomenon in English language teaching emerged when Candlin and Breen presented an idea that a syllabus should be open and negotiable. A syllabus should be designed through a communication involving the learners so that it will stimulate the learners’ way of thinking and knowledge (Candlin and Breen in Brumfit, 1984:6). It is in accordance with Yalden (1987) who stated that designing a syllabus needs two aspects that should to be taken into consideration: knowledge of the subject and learner-specific factors. It means that the syllabus designers should consider variables coming from the learners, such as country, region, age, social group, and gender.

A negotiated syllabus is one which represents the learner-centered process. According to Nation and Macalister (2010: 149) “a negotiated syllabus involves the teacher and the learners working together to make decisions at many of the parts of the curriculum design process.” It means that there is a communication between the teachers.
and the learners to decide what they are going to learn, what activities they are going to do, and how they are going to be assessed. It is definitely in contrast to the traditional syllabus which mainly presents a source of information that is just shared to the students, then filed after being taught, and very frequently used in every semester (O’Brien, Millis, and Cohen, 2008: 34).

In the traditional syllabus, teachers always act as a director in the classroom and the students just listen and follow the instructions. Whilst in the learning-centered syllabus, students are allowed to explore and actively ask matters related to their needs (Meyer and Jones, 1993: 21). This syllabus performs the teachers as the facilitators or consultants for the learners. The syllabus is considered to be able to answer two hypotheses related to motivational problems, namely the lack of motivation occurs since the students think that education will give no value to them and they have a belief that they will not succeed no matter how they try (Anderson, 2003: 24).

This study is aimed to investigate the implementation of a negotiated syllabus in English language teaching at university level. It will also reveal the activities the teachers commonly apply in the implementation. Further, it will also discuss the strengths and constraints during the implementation.

Methodology
As the goals of this study is to investigate the implementation of negotiated syllabuses in English teaching at university level, to discover the types of the activities used as well as the strengths and the drawbacks of the implementation, this study was designed in the form of descriptive qualitative study employing interviews with 15 the English teachers at university level in Semarang and Jakarta. The English teachers have educational background from master degree who have experienced in handling college students in some faculties with different types of courses and levels. The teachers have also experienced in teaching from 5 years until ten years which means that they are coming from the recent teachers who are expected to come up with the updates of the teaching era. The interview was done randomly that did not focus only in one regency. The teachers as the subjects of this research are 20% teaching in universities in Jakarta and 80% teaching English in universities in Semarang. They were interviewed with three main questions related to the implementation of the negotiated syllabuses, namely whether or not they apply them in the classroom, the types of the activities used in the classroom for those who apply them, and the strengths and constraints faced by the teachers and the students while conducting the activities.

1. The Implementation of Negotiated Syllabuses
Based on the interview, it showed that 93.33% of the teachers have learned the term of a negotiated syllabus in the teaching and learning activity and some of them apply it in their classroom activities. On the other hand, 6.7% of the teachers have not learned the term and never practiced it in the teaching process. From the data, it indicated that a negotiated syllabus has been
actually familiar for the teachers these days. However not many teachers use them as a way to bridge the teachers and students’ needs.

2. Types of the Activities with Negotiated Syllabuses

The teachers as the subjects of this research are those who have handled many kinds of courses in the university. The courses that they usually handle are English for Specific Purposes (English for Nursing, English for Pharmacy, English for Law, English for Psychology, English for Business), English for Conversation, Speaking, Basic English, Sentence Writing, Discourse, Critical Reading, and some other English skills like TOEFL, IBT, and IELTS. In this option, the activities are divided into some categories. The activities include: topics, assignments, daily activities, mid test/final test, assessment and projects. Further, the research is going to find out in what activities the teachers usually have a negotiation with the students. The data showed that mostly the teachers and the students communicate the assignments that should be given by the teachers to the students. The teachers usually give the basic concepts to the students and the students are asked to deliver their ideas towards the concept of the assignment. The students give improvement, and suggestions towards the tasks offered. It presents the biggest percentage of all, that is 33.70% of the population.

The second activity is topic. Deciding what topics that are the best and needed by the students is not an easy task, considering the teachers must be able to consider it with many things. Teachers should analyze the target of needs analysis, namely necessities, lacks, and wants. Necessities should answer a question related to what is the importance of the language for the learners. Necessities analyze the demands of the target tasks. Lacks try to discover the current students’ capability which are definitely related to the learners’ previous learning, that is whether or not they have learned the types of subjects or lessons. Wants cover what the learners think about what are useful for them. In this case, wants must be different from one student to another student. Therefore, it is important to have a negotiation or interviews with the students so that they can deliver what they actually want related to their academic goal.

The third activity which also has 19.51% of the population is shown by daily activities. What is meant by daily activities here is that any classroom activities which are done by the teachers and the learners in the classroom whenever they have English class. It can be about listening, reading, writing, or speaking activities. The examples can be like making a script of a conversation between a nurse and a patient based on one topics for nursing faculty students, or doing a phone call between a salesman and a customer in English for Business. Although these activities are discussed, the teachers are still the ones who have the privilege and responsibility for deciding the best option for the learners.

The fourth is project which is presented by 14.63% of the population. Project here means that the teachers and the students discuss projects that should be done by the students. Projects are activities which need more preparation for the learners, or even the teachers, since they must be planned and designed for the particular purpose of teaching. When discussing the projects, the teachers usually give the point of the projects then the students will give feedback towards the concepts. They will accordingly review based on the difficulty level in the implementation and preparation. Project assignment is not given in every meeting. It can be given once or twice in a semester. It can be done in individual or in a group with various activities, like video-making project, voice recording, monthly English bulletin-making, cooking class, presentation, etc. Those projects must be relevant with the topic given in the classroom.

Next is assessment. Based on the interview, it is learned that the teachers are still the ones who have the authorities for giving the students assessment. It is shown by 0% from the population.

The last is mid-test or final test type. It is shown by 14.63 % from the population. In this option, the teachers usually offer the learners if the tests are a take-home test or a class test. For example: the teachers offer to have tests in the classroom, yet the students prefer take-home test. Or, the students want to have writing test in classroom, but the teachers expect them to make paper-assignment tests. Or, it is also possible to have a project for their mid/final test. Based on the
different point of views between the teachers and the learners, both sides can communicate their ideas and find the best solution related to the test form.

Based on the activities, some teachers who implement the negotiated syllabuses, apply them in the first and second meeting, and some of them conduct them in the middle of the semester. They are usually conducted when the class are English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

3. The Strengths and The Constraints
Negotiated syllabuses are seen as “radical” for some circles since they break the common norm where the institutions or teachers are the ones who have the absolute power in handling and controlling the class. Implementing syllabus which is also as a result of developing era is not easy. There must be positives and negatives that are faced.

According to the data derived from the interviews with the teachers, there are positives and negatives of the negotiated syllabus they are implementing:

a). Negotiated syllabuses are able to answer wants of the learners. The learners usually have their own ideas related to things which are beneficial for them. By doing a negotiation in syllabus, the teachers know what the learners want and can directly give feedbacks towards what they want. In the implementation, the teachers can create some classroom activities which can lead to the learners’ want. For example, the learners want to improve their listening skill, so the teachers must be able to provide the learners’ want by giving them audiolingual method in the classroom or give more listening materials and assignments related to the topic being discussed.

b). Related to the previous advantages which discuss the learners’ wants, the learners are more enthusiastic and excited of the lesson because they are the ones who decide and discuss it. Because the students are more motivated, it will be easier for them to follow and absorb the materials given.

c). The students are more independent, constructive, and innovative related to their engagement with the lesson. The students are more aware with their wants and needs, so they try to fulfil them by creating the activities they want in the classroom.

d). Negotiated syllabuses can adjust the students’ needs. For example, the students are going to be sent to do clinical practice in the hospital for nursing faculty students in that semester. Based on this case, the teachers can provide topics that are related to the students’ clinical practice, helped by the students’ interference.

e). There are more various topics and materials that can be presented in the classroom considering that those are the results of discussion between the teachers and the students.

f). The topics can be guidance for the following semester class.

g). It reaches a maximum result. It happens because the teachers are open to gain any feedbacks or comments from the learners.

h). The students can evaluate their own capability in English.

However, there are also some constraints faced by the teachers and learners:

a). They need skillful teachers because the teachers must be ready with new plans, materials, and assessment.

b). The teachers must also not forget to communicate the new-made syllabuses to the peer-teachers.

c). The students do not know their own needs and wants.

d). The students are still get used to following the traditional system where they just follow the given materials.

e). The teachers must give extra-control towards the students and learning progress.

Conclusion
A negotiated syllabus is a result of updates of the developing era to answer the students’ needs and the teachers’ difficulties. It can be said that negotiated syllabuses do not focus on the institutions as the guidance, but the commitment between the teachers and the students towards the teaching and learning activities. These activities are useful since those answers the students’ wants and needs. However, they also require skillful teachers as the teachers have to give extra time and energy for the continuous new plans, materials, and assessment. Therefore, not many teachers are willing to take the challenges by applying negotiated syllabuses as their teaching and learning ground. However, as the popularity of negotiated syllabus grow, it is expected that
these syllabuses can be used as one of solutions to anticipate problems in teaching higher education.

References