

Chapter I

Introduction

A. Background of the Study

English has become global language of today's world. It affects almost all aspects of life. As a matter of fact, "by the 21st century, English had become the main world language of literature, periodical publications, science, advertising, pop music, cinema, and technology" (Johnson, 2009:1). Statistics shows that English has been the first language used in the internet (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>). It is used by 565 millions internet users.

Rapid global changes in all aspects of today's life bring an increasing number of challenges that affect people's needs for knowledge and skills. Tarone (2005:5) suggests that higher education students in Asian countries perceive a need for sound proficiency in English to ensure better "access to the international communities of business, science, culture and intellectual life." Furthermore, the latest needs analysis of UNJ students (Sulastini, 2011) shows that they need English to support their academic (70%) and professional life (50%).

Education is responsible for providing people with English skills they need to survive in today's and tomorrow's life. This also applies to higher education in Indonesia. Minister of National Education (MoNE) has

issued a policy that requires all higher education institutions to include *Mata Kuliah Umum Bahasa Inggris* (henceforth will be referred to as MKU BING which literally means General English course) in its S1 program curriculum. MKU BING is a sub-component of *Mata-kuliah Pengembangan Kepribadian* (MPK) or Personality Development Course that aims at facilitating students to be competitive Indonesian intellectuals (MoNE, 2000:2).

MKU BING in UNJ is a two-credit compulsory course aiming at developing students' reading skill with respect to their field of study (UNJ, 2008:62). It plays two significant roles. Firstly, MKU BING shall facilitate successful achievement of UNJ vision “a world class university” and mission "building future leaders" (UNJ, 2006:24-25). Secondly, it shall facilitate students to achieve minimum standard of English proficiency for S1 graduates, i.e. TOEFL score > 425 (UNJ, 2008:47).

Having significant roles in UNJ, MKU BING is expected to be responsive to its students' needs. Such quality can be achieved when proper program evaluation is carried out from time to time. Meanwhile, no sufficient attention has been given to program evaluation. The existing works focus on syllabus and material development (Dharmahusni, 2010) and needs analysis (Sulastini, 2011).

This study evaluates the responsiveness of “reading” teaching and learning activities of MKU BING to the students' needs. Students from different faculty have different needs. Therefore, this study focuses only

on Faculty of Technology students. Rapid changes in technology affect their needs and create higher demand for them to have sound proficiency in English. Furthermore, they are expected to have certain academic and professional competencies at the end of S1 program. MKU BING is responsible for facilitating this.

B. Problems Identification

1. What is the purpose and function of MKU BING UNJ?
2. What do students need to learn in MKU BING?
3. Have the learning materials met students' needs?
4. Does the course employ learning activities, topic/sub-skills, skills that are authentic, realistic and relevant to students field of study and future profession?

C. Research Questions

The main research question is how responsive are the teaching and learning activities of MKU BING course to Faculty of Technology students' learning needs in developing their academic reading skills? The followings are the sub-questions:

1. What types of English reading materials are students expected to process in their S1 study? Do students perceive that their MKU BING course have exposed them to these types of materials?

2. What types of reading activities are students expected to process in their S1 study? Do students perceive that their MKU BING course have exposed them to these types of tasks?
3. What types of reading skills are students expected to perform in their S1 study? Do students perceive that their MKU BING course have successfully developed their mastery of these skills?

D. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the responsiveness of “reading” teaching and learning activities of MKU BING to Faculty of Technology students’ learning needs. The needs include types of English reading materials, reading activities, and reading skills.

E. Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To identify types of English reading materials that the students are expected to process in their S1 study and to evaluate whether MKU BING course has exposed them to these types of materials or not.
2. To identify reading activities that the students are expected to process in their S1 study and to evaluate whether MKU BING course has exposed them to these reading activities or not.

3. To identify reading skills that the students are expected to perform in their S1 study and to evaluate whether MKU BING course has successfully developed their mastery of these skills or not.

F. Significance of the Study

This study is significant to be conducted since it is a necessity for MKU BING to be responsive to the students' needs, in this case, Faculty of Technology students. Meanwhile, the responsiveness of MKU BING has not yet been given sufficient attention. The obtained data can be used by administrator and stakeholders as the basis for decision-making for the program. Furthermore, it can be used as a source for other researchers in the same field.