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How do students' entry-level competencies determine the learning needs of BIPA lectures?

Yuni Pratiwi, Imam Suyitno*, Ary Fawzi, Dewi Ariani, Ariva Luciandika
Universitas Negeri Malang
*Corresponding Author: imam.suyitno.fs@um.ac.id

ABSTRACT

BIPA (the acronym of Bahasa Indonesia untuk Pelajar Asing) is one of the Indonesian-language learning programs for foreign learners. Understanding entry-level of student competencies is very useful as a starting point for preparing learning according to their learning needs in future lectures. This study aimed to describe how to assess student competence before conducting the lecture to determine their learning needs. This study used a qualitative and quantitative approach conducted in BIPA lectures involving seven lecturers as informants and 159 students as samples. Data were collected through document analysis, interviews, and tests. Qualitative data were used to describe the essential learning materials studied in BIPA lectures. Quantitative data were analyzed using the statistical tool 'Pearson Product Moment to assess the entry-level competencies of students before taking courses. The results showed that the entry-level students were in a low category. The correlation showed that the Grade Point Index (GPI) achieved in the previous lecture did not contribute significantly to student understanding in BIPA lectures because of the different substantial topics of the subjects. The low entry-level test scores reflect the students have not mastered the essential materials for BIPA lectures, so they need to study them seriously. These findings can be used as a reference in determining the learning needs of students in the BIPA special program lectures. Therefore, these findings are useful for designing learning and determining policies that can meet the learning needs of students.

Keywords: entry-level competency, learning needs, BIPA lecture

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INTRODUCTION

Learning activities occur in the process of interaction between students and their learning environment. An effective learning environment can support the optimal learning process. The widest use of the learning environment can make learning activities more interesting and make it easier for students to master the material they are studying. Therefore, the teacher as the main agent in learning has the responsibility to create an effective learning environment. An effective learning environment can be created if the teacher does not only focus on curriculum content but must consider the characteristics of the students. Teachers must have a sufficient understanding of the characteristics of students to meet the demands of their learning needs.

Regarding the learning needs of students, this study focuses on the needs of students in lecturing specific programs of BIPA. A specific program of BIPA lecture is a program that prepares additional authority for graduates to become BIPA teachers in the future. In the program, there are 5 compulsory subjects about BIPA learning. The lectures encourage the students to have experiences in teaching BIPA. Throughout the lectures, students are expected to gain knowledge about cross-cultural understanding and the characteristics of the language as it will be taught to foreigners. By taking the lectures, students are expected to gain skills in designing language learning programs, developing language learning materials, and relating language learning strategies to foreign learners.

When conducting teaching-learning, teachers must have enough knowledge about the characteristics of the students, as well as the skills to teach the language in a manner that the foreign students will understand. Vrieling Stijnen, & Bastiaens (2018) explained that the effectiveness of the learning process can be improved when the learning is conducted in a manner that is based on the characteristics and needs of the students. Therefore, teachers must understand a wide variety of aspects relating to the cultural background, learning needs, teaching materials, and teaching strategies to conduct learning effectively. These aspects are important factors for planning a learning program and applying them to the teaching process will greatly assist learners.

Regarding teaching-learning BIPA, teachers have to continuously improve and upgrade their competencies to have adequate understanding and the skills required to teach languages to foreigners. As a result of these heavy demands, higher students who wish to become foreign language teachers in the future must ensure that they obtain adequate learning experiences themselves in the field of foreign language teaching. To gain this experience, students must take several lectures on language teaching for foreign students.

The learning experiences of students can be measured by assessment. Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources (Huba & Freed, 2000), and it is one of the most important aspects in the teaching-learning process to gather an understanding of what students know, understand, and do with their learning experiences. The test used to assess students' competencies must be reliable at ascertaining the correct information. Reliable assessment can be used to refine programs and to help improve students' learning (Allen, 2004). Therefore, the selection of essential course materials is an important part of developing tests for assessment.

The entry-level test is a set of questions to access student competencies that are conducted before the learning process begins. Lam (2015) explained that the entry-level test is useful for gathering information about the entry-level competencies of new students. The entry-level test is a systematic process of gathering and using the information to improve learning and develop student competencies (Palomba & Banta, 1999). The test must be developed with a view to the expected goals of student learning outcomes (Suskie, 2018) so that the scores of the test adequately reflect the entry-level competencies of the students. Based on the results of these tests, lecturers can prepare learning materials and learning strategies according to the needs of students.

To ensure that the test has high validity in measuring the entry-level competence of students, the materials developed in the test items must be based on the essential learning material of the course to be studied. The basis used to decide the main points of essential learning materials includes the vision and mission of the program, the achievement of targeted competencies, and the characteristics of the subjects. Therefore, the entry-level test is different from the achievement test used to measure students 'mastery of the material that has been learned. The entry-level test is used to promote the development of student competencies, and also to ascertain their desired performance changes (Rothwell, Benscoter, King, & King, 2015). Through entry-level tests, teachers can obtain an overview of student competencies before learning activities are carried out so that they can take appropriate policies in designing learning materials and strategies that can meet student needs.

In line with the description above, the results of a previous study by Suyitno, et al (2019) entitled How Prior Knowledge, Prospect, and Learning Behavior Determine Learning Outcomes of BIPA Students? showed that students' prior knowledge contributes to BIPA learning outcomes. Jaekel, et al (2022) in their study entitled The Impact of Early Foreign Language Learning on Language Proficiency Development from Middle to High School showed that students who already have prior knowledge have stability in maintaining their learning rhythm. Another previous study was conducted by Darkun (2019) with the title The Importance of Understanding Student Characteristics in Arabic Learning. The results of this study indicate that an understanding of prior knowledge and student learning styles makes it easier for teachers to determine appropriate learning strategies.

From the results of these previous studies, it can be revealed that understanding the entry level of student competence is an important aspect in the implementation of learning, especially in BIPA lectures. This is quite reasonable because learning BIPA is different from learning

Indonesian for Indonesian students. BIPA students are foreign students who already have knowledge of languages and cultural backgrounds that are different from the language they are going to learn. This difference needs attention from prospective BIPA teachers.

Based on the description above, this study aimed to describe how assess the entry-level competencies to determine learning needs of students. Based on the objective, the study sought answers to the problem "How to determine essential learning materials to be developed into entry-level test items that can be used to measure entry-level student competence? How to measure the entry-level of student competence towards the learning materials that will be achieved through the future lectures? How to determine students' learning needs for the future lectures?" The findings enabled the lecturers to obtain useful information on strategies for selecting the right learning materials for students. Furthermore, the findings significantly assist the institutions and parties in conducting language teaching for foreigners. The test kits produced in this study can be used to explore students' initial abilities before attending lectures. By utilizing this study, interested parties tend to gain insight into developing learning programs.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative and quantitative approach. This study was conducted at the Indonesian Language Study Program, Universitas Negeri Malang (UM). The study program offered BIPA lectures to students willing to become teachers of the Indonesian language for foreign learners. The BIPA lectures consist of 5 subjects, namely (1) Cross-Cultural Understanding (Crs1), (2) the Characteristics of BIPA Learning (Crs2), (3) Development of BIPA Learning Program (Crs3), (4) Development of BIPA Learning Materials (Crs4) and (5) Development of BIPA Learning Strategies (Crs5). Participants were 7 lecturers – all of them – teaching BIPA lectures. From all the lecturers, the study obtained all essential materials about the lectures. The study also involved 159 students –all of them- taking the BIPA lectures. From all of the students, the study obtained data that are in the form of scores illustrating students' entry-level competencies on BIPA lectures.

Data were collected through document studies, interviews, and tests. In conducting a document study, this study collects documents in the form of a syllabus for 5 courses in the BIPA special program. Based on these documents, this study conducted interviews and discussions with the lecturers of these courses to determine the essential materials for each course that must be mastered through lectures. The results of these activities are further used as a basis for developing entry-level test items. For collecting data on the entry-level competency of students, the study conducted a test on students. Student achievement scores in tests illustrated the condition of a student's initial ability so that it can be used as a basis for designing learning plans following student learning needs. To collect the grade point indexes (GPI) of students in their previous learning, the study conducted a documents analysis, namely through the technique of tracking student study results in the academic system. The GPI was needed to see the relationship between the scores achieved by students in entry-level assessments and student achievements in previous lectures.

The research data were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques. Qualitative data analysis was used to describe the essential materials that students need to master through BIPA lectures. The procedures performed in qualitative data analysis include data selection, data reduction, data presentation in tabular form, and data interpretation. Meanwhile, quantitative data analysis was used to measure the entry-level of student competence towards the BIPA lecture material that will be taken. Data in the form of scores were analyzed using statistical calculations 'Pearson Product Moment. This enabled the study to obtain the average, lowest, and highest scores, as well as the students' variance. From the statistical analysis, the study also obtained information on the correlation between students' test score and their GPI. The results of the statistical analysis were used to interpret students' entry-level competencies and create learning plans according to their needs.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Through document analysis, namely curriculum and syllabus, this study obtains data on expected graduate profiles, graduate learning achievement standards, course learning outcomes, and material topics per course programmed in the BIPA special program. In the curriculum, it is mentioned that the profile of graduates produced through the special BIPA program is "novice educators who master language and culture knowledge as well as Indonesian language skills, and educational science in designing, implementing, evaluating, and innovating language learning for foreign speakers as well as developing and managing additional relevant and responsive skills. with the demands, the development of science and information technology with the principle of lifelong learning, promoting humanities values, and having an entrepreneurial spirit (literacy-preneurship)". Meanwhile, the standard of graduate learning achievement expected in BIPA lectures is "mastering the concepts, principles, and procedures of critical, creative, and wise Indonesian language and culture so that they can interact constructively in local, regional and international communities to share ideas accurately, adequately, and effective".

The data on the course learning outcomes and material topics per course programmed in the BIPA special program is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The objectives and learning materials of BIPA lectures

No	Lectures	Objectives	Learning Materials
1	Crs1	To provide students with the right knowledge on the concept and principles of various languages and develop their skills to solve problems in teaching Indonesia to foreigners.	The teaching materials of this course covered the following cultural attributes: (1) the basic concepts of its understanding, (2) the importance of its integrity, (3) grouping, (4) differences, (5) communication attitudes, (6) adaptation, (7) verbal and nonverbal communication, (8) patterns of space and time, (9) perceptions, (10) intercultural mindset, and (11) communication problem.
2	Crs2	To provide students with an insight into foreign language learning.	The course materials covered the following: (1) concept, (2) the differences between first, second, and foreign languages, (3) second language learners, (4) learning purposes, (5) the differences between first and second language learning, and (6) the various problems.
3	Crs3	to ensure students master the principles of language programming and able them in the syllabus, learning plans, scenario design, and evaluation design.	The learning materials for achieving these competencies under BIPA programs are as follows: (1) concept, (2) types, (3) aspects and components, (4) design procedures, (5) syllabus development, (6) plans, (7) learning scenario, and (8) evaluation.
4	Crs4	To aid students to have an insight into the BIPA learning materials and resources	The learning materials for achieving these competencies are as follows: (1) nature of teaching, (2) types, (3) language, (4) cultures, (5) types of materials design, (6) design of language skills, (7) grammar, (8) cultural materials, and (9) developmental practice.
5	Crs5	To practice the act by teaching the language to foreigners by creating learning plans and conducting micro-teaching tests	the learning materials covered the following (1) the discussion on the concepts, principles, types, and problems of BIPA learning strategies, (2) the developments of micro-teaching materials design, and (3) practice to conduct micro-teaching.

Based on the data presented above, this study further conducted interviews and discussions with BIPA teachers to determine which material was deemed essential for students to master. The results of the discussion are manifested in a test grid as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The Outline of Test Materials

Subjects	Competency	Test materials	Sum of item test
Crs 1	Knowing and applying cross-cultural understanding in teaching language to foreign learners	The basic concepts of culture, the scope of cross-cultural studies, cultural values, cultural behavior, cultural objects, cultural conflicts related to language learning	20
Crs 2	Having insights about the characteristics of language Learning for foreign learners	History, nature, position, functions, problems, and prospects of language learning for foreign learners	20
Crs 3	Mastering the concept and skills to develop a language learning program for foreign learners	Language learning theory, characteristics of the program of language learning for foreign learners, components of the program, techniques, and procedures for developing the program,	20
Crs 4	Having insight and skills to develop language learning materials/resources for foreign learners	The essence of learning material/resources, types, and criteria for selecting teaching materials /resources, techniques, and procedures for developing teaching materials	20
Crs 5	Having insight into language learning strategies and being able to apply principles in teaching language to foreign learners	The essence of the approach, method, strategy, foreign language learning technique, various language learning strategies, implementation of teaching strategies	20
TOTAL			100

Based on the test grid, this study develops a test that is used to measure entry-level student competence in taking BIPA lectures. The number of questions developed to measure entry-level student competence per subject is 30 test items. Thus, there are 100 test items for 5 subjects.

The entry-level of student competence is determined based on the test scores. The results of the analysis of students' entry-level test scores (Appendix 1 - Table 3) are summarized as follows. Crs 1 (Cross-Cultural Understanding): with an average, standard deviation, variance, highest, and lowest scores of 26.29, 8.40, 70.63, 45, and 5, respectively. Crs 2 (Characteristics of BIPA): with an average, standard deviation, variance, highest, and lowest scores of 47.52, 11.22 125.91, 80, and 15, respectively. Crs 3 (Development of BIPA Learning Program): with an average, standard deviation, variance, highest, and lowest scores of 36.67, 9.558, 91.350, 65, and 10, respectively. Crs 4 (Development of BIPA Learning Materials/Resource): with an average, standard deviation, variance, highest, and lowest scores of 21.04, 7.14, 50.97, 40, and 5, respectively. Crs 5 (Development of BIPA Learning Strategy): with an average, standard deviation, variance, highest, and lowest scores of 36.67, 9.44, 89.13, 55, and 5, respectively. Total scores of 5 Crs: with an average, standard deviation, variance, highest, and lowest scores of 33.64, 5.29, 27.99, 49, and 20, respectively.

The lowest, highest, mean, standard deviation and variance scores of students (Appendix 2 - Table 4) are 3.00, 3.97, 3,68, 0.17, and 0.03, respectively. Therefore, from the data obtained, students possess high competence. The results of correlation between students' scores for each lecture and their GPI, with the number of samples (N) and r-criticism are 159 and 0.159, with a significance level of 0.05, respectively, are summarized as follows. The coefficient of the correlation between students' scores in Crs 1 and GPI (2-tailed) equals 0.618 (>0.159), at a significant level of 0.040 (Appendix 3 - Table 5). Therefore, there is no correlation between students' scores in Crs 1 and GPI. The coefficient of the correlation between students' scores in Crs 2 and GPI (2-tailed) equals 0.557 (>0.159), at a significant level of 0.047 (Appendix 4 - Table 6). Therefore, there is no correlation between students' scores in Crs 2 and GPI. The coefficient of the correlation between students' scores in Crs 3 and GPI (2-tailed) equals 0.039 (<0.159), at a significant level of 0.164 (Appendix 5 - Table 7). Therefore, there is a positive correlation between students' scores in Crs 3 and GPI. The coefficient of the correlation between students' scores in Crs 4 and GPI (2-tailed) equals 0.374 (>0.159), at a significant level of -0.071 (Appendix

6 - Table 8). Therefore, there is no correlation between students' scores in Crs 4 and GPI. The significance level of the correlation between the two variables is negative. The coefficient of the correlation between students' scores in Crs 5 and GPI (2-tailed) equals 0.095 (<0.159), at a significant level of 0.133 (Appendix 7 - Table 9). Therefore, there is a positive correlation between students' scores in Crs 5 and GPI, with a weak significance level.

Discussion

The Essential Learning Materials of BIPA Lectures

Learning material is one of the important components in the teaching-learning system. These learning materials function as media and learning resources with these materials students will gain new experiences as a form of behavior change (Mediyawati, Lustyantie, & Emzir, 2019). Tomlinson (2012) explained that learning material is a learning resource that serves as a vehicle to improve students' knowledge, abilities, and skills. Furthermore, it is explained that learning materials are also useful for monitoring the assimilation of learned information and make a significant contribution to the overall development of student behavior. In line with this statement, Mazgon & Stefanc (2012) explained that learning materials are a key component in educational technology adapted by teachers to provide learning experiences for students.

To understand the learning materials, especially in the learning of BIPA lecturers, this study analyzed the curriculum and learning syllabus. The consideration used in the analysis is that the curriculum is seen as the heart or main component of education and learning (Priestley & Philippou, 2019). Through curriculum analysis, various information related to the implementation of education can be obtained (Lashley, 2019), especially the information about the expected profile of graduates and the standard of graduate learning outcomes. These two aspects become the basic reference in developing the structure of the lecture program and determining the variety and names of courses that support the achievement of educational targets that have been formulated in the curriculum. Implicitly, Iserbyt & Coolkens (2020) explained that all courses developed in the curriculum structure-function as components to support the achievement of the expected graduate profile and the targeted graduate learning achievement standards. Therefore, the objectives and content of the learning experience per course must be oriented towards achievements that are in line with the curriculum targets of the learning program (Dodd, 2021).

As Table 1, each course has a variety of learning objectives and content. The learning content is formulated into topics of learning material that must be mastered by students through lecture activities. By studying these topics, students will gain a learning experience according to the formulation of learning outcomes for these subjects. The various topics are developed by the teacher based on the characteristics of the courses, the objectives of the lectures, the needs for employment, and the institutional objectives of the learning program (see McKimm & Barrow, 2009). Of these various topics, some are essential materials that must be mastered by students and some are additional materials that enrich students' knowledge. Table 2 above presents the essential materials per subject in the BIPA special program. Lecturers who teach these courses have adequate understanding to determine which materials are essential and which are not (Cuesta, 2010). Therefore, to determine the essential learning materials, this study describes the material topics in the syllabus and discusses them with the lecturer in charge of the course (Gusnawaty & Nurwati, 2019).

Understanding essential learning materials is an important aspect of developing entry-level tests. The entry-level test will have high content validity of the test items are developed based on the key materials that must be mastered by students. The test results will have a significant function and can be used as a consideration in determining learning policies if the test items accurately measure the competencies that should be mastered by students (Núñez Pardo & Téllez Téllez, 2009). Therefore, in learning, teachers must have a sufficient understanding of the essential learning materials that must be taught to students. This understanding will be useful for teachers to determine orientation and learning strategies that support the achievement of meaningful learning outcomes for students.

The Students' Entry-level Competencies

The entry-level of student competence can be a starting point in determining the design and implementation of learning strategies. Lecturers or teachers must have a good understanding of the competencies possessed by students before learning activities are carried out (Sukodoyo, 2018). This understanding will guide the teacher in choosing the variety and level of difficulty of the material being taught, learning strategies, and media and learning resources that can support the effectiveness of learning (Hailikar, Katajavuori, & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2008). Learning that ignores the initial level of competence of students will face many challenges and problems in the learning process because, there is a possibility, the learning materials taught cannot meet the expectations and learning needs of students. Thus, the interaction of the implementation of learning is not conducive and the learning outcomes become less meaningful.

An entry-level competency is a fundamental characteristic that has been determined as being desirable for students, to anticipate their future performance and suitability for various tasks and work situations (Koswara, Dallyono, Suherman, & Hyangsewu, 2021). Competency is an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effectiveness and/or superior performance in a job or situation (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Understanding desirable entry-level competencies of students are useful to allow teachers to better plan and conduct lectures. All teachers must understand the competencies of their students and their importance of them, as these are the main baseline factor used when considering the education system. This understanding is the starting point when implementing the teaching-learning process (Zhang, Han, Zhao, & Meng, 2018) as all components of the learning system are designed with base levels of student competence in mind so that the learning process can run more effectively.

Information about the entry-level competencies of students is useful for lecturers because it can then be used to plan lessons to allow more effective application of the learning process (Newman Trimmer, & Padró, 2019) and to decide on the right portion of learning materials and other applicable learning strategies (Barrette & Paesani, 2018). Similarly, an understanding of the entry-level competence of students allows the teachers to better determine whether the individual fits in with the learning tasks being performed (Jiang, Zhang, May, & Qin, 2018) as the overall effectiveness of the learning process often depends on the perspective, background, and prior knowledge of the students (Kennedy, Coffrin, Barba, & Corrin, 2015). The learning process often faces obstacles because the demands of the learning task are not in line with the learning needs of the students (Hassel & Ridout, 2017).

To determine the entry-level of student competence, this study was conducted in 2 ways, namely by identifying the grade point index (GPI) that students had achieved in previous lectures, and through an entry-level test which was developed specifically to measure students' prior knowledge of the lecture material. will be taken. The GPI of students reflects the presence of students with a certain level of competence. The high and low GPI of students may be one of the predictive factors in determining learning success in the next lecture (Garnett & Cavaye, 2015 & Dong et al., 2020). However, for the learning needs of different subject matter, GPI cannot fully be used as a determining factor for learning success. Therefore, to measure students' initial knowledge of essential materials for the next lecture, this study conducted a test by using the instrument of entry-level test which was developed based on the key materials of the courses to be studied. Entry-level tests are used to promote student competency development, and also to ensure desired performance changes (Rothwell et al., 2015).

The GPI of students' is not always positively correlated with test scores achieved by them on entry-level tests. Table 4 showed that students possess a high potential to complete the BIPA courses with an average score of GPI in the high category. However, this is contrary to the results of the entry-level assessment, shown in Table 3, which is in the lower category. The overall subjects tested showed that all students achieved lower scores in entry-level assessment, which means that they do not understand the essential material of the course. Table 3 also showed that the standard deviation value is high, which means that the students' competence differed with high variances. Therefore, students need to work hard in the future lectures by focusing on essential learning materials (Tuasikal, Hartoto, Prakoso, Kartiko, & Hariyanto, 2021).

These findings are important for lecturers because they can be used as a basis in determining strategies used to prepare learning plans. By understanding the entry-level competence of the students, lecturers tend to develop learning materials in line with their needs. Reber, Allen, & Reber (2009) stated that the entry-level competencies of students are a prerequisite for achieving a higher learning experience and a benchmark for changes. The understanding of entry-level competency of students is useful for teachers to make a positive contribution to further learning and plan an effective (Cerda et al.,2014) as well as productive teaching process (Kubat, 2018).

These findings are similar to the results of the study conducted by Astuti (2015) on the effect of students' early ability and interest to learn. An understanding of their abilities is the main factor of the learning process, and this is because it is useful for determining their position in the system and the lecture process conducted (Klein-Collins & Wertheim, 2013). Furthermore, this understanding is useful for lecturers to determine the learning strategies to be applied, as well as the right materials, media, and learning strategies to use.

Based on the discussion above, this study confirms that to measure entry-level student competence, it is not enough to just consider the GPI that has been achieved by students, but it is necessary to carry out an entry-level test. The entry-level test score can show directly the strengths and weaknesses of students towards the learning materials for the lectures that they will take. This can be shown based on the entry level test results which illustrate that the lowest, highest, mean, standard deviation and variance scores of students are 3.00, 3.97, 3.68, 0.17, and 0.03, respectively. The achievement of these scores illustrates that students do not yet have adequate knowledge about the content of the BIPA lectures that they will study. Through test answers, it can be seen directly which material has been mastered by students and which material must be considered more carefully in learning. Therefore, teachers and education policymakers have to prepare entry-level test kits before the learning process is carried out (Kuswari, Haerudin, & Nugraha, 2022).

The Students' Learning Needs in BIPA Lectures

To determine the learning materials that students need in learning, this study refers to the analysis of the entry-level test results obtained by them. The results of the analysis of test scores indicate that the entry-level of student competence is in a low category, which means that they do not yet have sufficient competence about the essential materials for each subject that will be studied in the future lectures. These conditions suggest that in lectures, students need to learn all the subject matter as developed in the test items. In determining the scope and depth of learning material for each course, lecturers must consider the learning experiences that have been obtained by students in previous lectures.

The results of the correlational analysis, as Tabel 5—9, show that the test scores for several subjects tested are positively correlated with the GPI achieved by students, but weak correlation. The high or low level of the correlation significance indicates the size of the contribution of entry-level competencies in learning outcomes. The higher the significant level of the correlation means the greater contribution of each variable along with their relationship. The change in the magnitude of 1 variable correlates with their positive or negative directions (Schober, Boer, & Schwarte, 2018).

The existence of the correlation, as the findings of the study, implies that the achievements and learning experiences obtained by students in previously learning do not contribute significantly in determining learning success. Kennedy et al. (2015) stated that the results of the correlation analysis are used as a basis for predicting students' prior knowledge that contributes to the achievement of learning outcomes for their future lectures. Therefore, even though it does not contribute significantly, to determine the learning materials that will be studied by students, teachers, in addition to referring to the entry-level test results, need to consider student learning experiences (Arismunandar et al., 2022).

Based on the description above, it can be said that in lectures, learning material must be more focused on student learning needs. This is intended to make students have adequate insight into learning (Ramdani et al., 2021). The course material is determined based on the principle of

meaningfulness for students as prospective teachers. Learning objectives are focused on mastering essential materials that can enrich student insights in lectures. Ahmadi & Mehdi (2016) said that the use of learning materials that are suitable for learning needs is more beneficial for students.

Learning material that is relevant to students' learning needs can influence their performance in the learning process. Students will try to understand the learning material faced by interacting with the learning environment to understand the stimulus they receive (Moenikia & Zahed-Babelan, 2010). Through these activities, students will constructively build concepts, rules, and principles in the new assignments they learn (Loo, 2004). Understanding student learning needs is important for lecturers as a basis for preparing learning plans that are following student preferences.

In the learning process, students have diverse learning strategies in mastering learning materials. Brown (2008) explained that to meet the needs of students, learning materials must be designed based on learning needs, learning objectives, and the ability level of students. The relevance of learning material that is in line with the needs of students can motivate them to learn because they are aware of their learning needs (Losada et al., 2017). Learning material that is suitable for students learning needs can improve learning processes and outcomes more effectively (Sadeghi, Hassani, & Hessari, 2014).

The student's success in learning, in addition to the accuracy of the selection of learning materials, also is affected by many factors, and the most influential factor is the teacher. Therefore, improving teacher competencies is very important in the learning process. According to Ghasemi, Moonaghi, & Heydari (2018), teachers play an important role in student academic involvement through motivation and interests, mental concentration, participation in learning activities, and independence. Therefore, the teacher's understanding of student competencies and learning needs is the main factor in determining the essential materials needed by students in learning.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, determining the essential learning materials in each course and developing them into entry-level test items is an important activity that teachers need to do before learning is carried out. The entry-level test has an important function to assess the competence of students at the beginning of each lesson to determine their initial abilities. This is because the scores obtained can be used to describe the position of students in achieving learning targets, providing information on the initial level of competence, thus helping lecturers in compiling learning programs according to their needs. Therefore, this finding has a contribution for educational institutions, especially for lecturers or teachers, to determine policies that are relevant to the needs of students to overcome their learning difficulties and improve their outcomes more effectively. In addition, these findings are also useful as a reference source for further research, especially in developing study topics, developing theoretical foundations, and determining research methods.

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