

# How English Intensive Course Program Affects the English Proficiency of Students of Teachers' Colleges in Indonesia

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## Abstract

*This article reports the implementation of the English Intensive Course (IC) program and examines its effectiveness in improving the English proficiency of the students of the English departments in eight teachers' colleges. IC program is a one-semester course with 18 credits. The instructional materials of this program were specifically-organized and used in an integrated manner. Although some weaknesses were noted in the implementation, the IC program was likely to have a positive effect on the students' English proficiency. Comparisons of pretest and posttest scores of IC students in each of the teachers' colleges and in all eight teachers' colleges indicated significant differences. However, because of the absence of a control group in the implementation of the IC program, the findings should be interpreted with care. Additional data concerning students' responses on the IC program showed that various aspects of the program were implemented well.*

**Keywords:** *English intensive course, IC program, English proficiency, English language teacher education, teachers' colleges.*

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There has been a serious concern to improve the quality of the English secondary school teachers in Indonesia. This is evident from the effort of the government to revise the 1995 National Curriculum of S1 English Language Teacher Education. An important part of the new curriculum is the introduction of the English Intensive Course (IC) program. The IC program has been tried out in a number of teachers' colleges. In the academic year of 2000/2001, eight teachers' colleges implemented the program. They were:

- Institute of Teacher Training and Education at Singaraja (IKIP Singaraja)
- Jember University (UJ)
- Mataram University (UNRAM)
- Riau University (UNRI)
- State University of Malang (UM)
- State University of Padang (UNP)
- State University of Semarang (UNNES), and
- State University of Surabaya (UNESA)

According to Djiwandono (1999), IC program is organized along several major points. First, it is given as one-semester program with 18 credits that has to be taken by the first-year students majoring in English education. Second, it is a course that has to be carried out intensively with an average of 28 to 30 semester-hours per week. Third, the purpose of the course is to improve the students' fluency in English supported by



mastery in some basic aspects of language skills and components. Fourth, the course materials are “specifically selected, organized, developed, and used in an integrated manner” for overall proficiency in English. Fifth, the teaching of the course should involve a team working in a good coordination. Finally, periodical evaluation should be given to examine students’ progress and achievement and to ensure that remedial actions can be given in the appropriate time.

In its actual implementation, the IC program has been given not only to students from the education stream in the eight teachers’ colleges, but also to those from the non-education stream. This is because of the wider mandate given to state universities (formerly known as IKIP) that used to specialize in producing teachers and other education-related professionals. With the wider mandate, it is possible for the state universities to prepare teachers and non-teaching professionals as well within a single department. The universities in this category include UM, UNP, UNNES, and UNESA.

The purpose of this article is to report the implementation of the IC program and to examine the effectiveness of the program in improving the English proficiency of the students in the eight teachers’ colleges. It firstly presents brief data of the participants of the program. It then discusses the profile of the IC program and this is followed by the examination of the results of the implementation. It concludes the discussion by pointing out some recent development of the IC program.

## **Participants of the IC Program**

The eight teachers’ colleges did not start to implement the IC program at the same time. IKIP Singaraja, along with UNNES and UNESA, have implemented the IC program for two years (Program studi pendidikan bahasa Inggris STKIP Singaraja, 2001; Agustien & Sisbiyanto, 2001; Retnaningdyah, et al., 2001). In four other teachers’ colleges, i.e. UJ, UNRAM, UNRI, and UNP, the IC program was firstly introduced (Istianah & Sukmaantara, 2001; Sribagus, 2001; Johar & Novitri, 2001; Zainuddin, et al., 2001). The other teachers’ college, UM, has implemented the IC program for eight years (Oka & Andreani, 2001a). This is because the IC program was initially developed at this university and was later adopted as a part of the national curriculum for English language teacher education (Oka & Andreani, 2001b).

There were 626 students who followed the IC program. They were distributed into 30 classes in the eight teachers’ colleges. In each of the teachers’ colleges, the number of the students varied from 42 to 146 and the number of the classes ranged from 2 to 7. The number of the students in each class varied from 16 to 24. The IC program involved 117 teachers from the eight teachers’ colleges (Djiwandono, 2001). In each teachers’ college, the number of teachers teaching the IC program varied from 11 to 22. While all teachers’ colleges allowed 18 credits, the number of semester-hours allocated for the IC program varied from 24 to 28 per week. With IKIP Singaraja as an exception, the IC program in the teachers’ colleges consisted of regular classroom meetings and independent study sessions that included listening and reading activities. Unlike other teachers’ colleges, IKIP Singaraja had an excursion program as an additional activity (Program studi pendidikan bahasa Inggris STKIP Singaraja, 2001). The number of classes, students, and teachers involved, credits, and semester hours in the IC program in the eight teachers’ colleges is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Number of classes, students, teachers, credits, and semester hours in the IC program in eight teachers’ colleges in Indonesia**

No	Teachers' Colleges	Classes	Students	Teachers	Credits	Semester Hours
1	IKIP Singaraja	2	42	12	18	28
2	UJ	2	46	8	18	27
3	UNRAM	3	62	12	18	27
4	UNRI	3	53	12	18	26
5	UM	5	99	15	18	24
6	UNP	4	92	22	18	27
7	UNNES	4	86	19	18	27
8	UNESA	7	146	17	18	27
	Total	30	626	117		

### Profile of the IC Program

The profile of IC program may be seen from the components of instruction, among others: materials, teaching and learning process, evaluation, and program administration.

#### Instructional materials

Aspects of instructional materials that need to be discussed include the types of materials and how the materials were organized.

The instructional materials consisted of two volumes of student's handbooks, two volumes of student workbooks, one teacher's guide (Kadarisman & Murdibjono, 2000a; 2000b; 2000c), and 25 cassettes of recorded materials along with the tapescripts (Intensive Course Program, 2000a). These materials were used in all the teachers' colleges. In addition, for independent study the students were given listening and reading materials that were prepared by each teachers' college. Therefore, the types of materials for independent study varied from one teachers' college to another. For example, the IC students of UNESA were given *Listen Carefully* for listening activities (Retnaningdyah, et al, 2001) and reading passages from *Collins English library* and *Growing in English Language Skills* (Finocchiaro & Lavanda, 1987) for reading activities.

The instructional materials in the student' handbooks were graded and divided into lessons and units. There were 30 lessons and each lesson consisted of four units (A few lessons, however, had 3 units). In each unit, the materials were presented in a typical form of organization with the following sections:

- Conversation
- Vocabulary focus
- Explanation
- Let's practice
- Pronunciation
- Communicative activities
- Listening

In the *conversation* section, new words and expressions mostly relevant with the topic of a particular unit are introduced in a conversational context. The *vocabulary focus* section lists important words and expressions used in the unit. The *explanation*



section concerns grammatical structures. *Let's practice* contains exercises on grammatical items explained in the previous part. The *pronunciation section* contains a brief explanation on articulatory phonetics, pronunciation model, and pronunciation practice. The *communicative activities* section contains various activities, ranging from simple conversation involving peers to role-plays and games. The *listening section* contains exercises based on the *explanation* and *let's practice* sessions. In the listening exercises, the students were assigned to respond to the instructions from the tape recorder. In this section, the students were occasionally given songs to sing together or jazz chants to practice.

The student's workbooks provide enrichment materials, including writing for spelling accuracy and for grammar reinforcement. The workbooks also give prompts and models for some of the listening activities so that the students could be helped in following the sequence of presentation in the listening section. The tapescripts are the written version of the recorded materials. The teacher's guide contains information on how the IC program should be implemented and keys to some quizzes and riddles in the student's handbooks.

### **Teaching and learning process**

The teaching and learning process in the IC program was carried out by a group of teachers in each teachers' college. Within the group there was a coordinator. Part of the coordinator's responsibilities was to arrange a close coordination and to control that the teaching ran well. As a consequence that the materials were presented in an integrated manner, the coordinator had to involve faculty members who were capable and willing to teach various language skills and language components in a single course session. In addition, because of the graded materials, the course coordinator had to make sure that all materials were presented in the order of presentation that had been determined. In this case, a mechanism should be established to anticipate a teacher who might not come to teach. Swapping and assigning a substitute teacher were two examples of the mechanism.

Depending on the agreement in the coordination forum, a teacher may teach several sessions in a particular class or several sessions in different classes. One advantage of the teaching of different classes is that the students could experience different teaching styles from different teachers. The disadvantage is that it was difficult for the teacher to get to know well the students in different classes. Getting to know the students well is thus one advantage of teaching in the same class. However, the disadvantage is that the students might get bored easily if the teacher did not apply various teaching techniques.

Since the instructional materials have been organized and the sections of the units have been determined, a particular teacher might not teach the same types of sections. In one meeting he or she might teach *conversation*, *vocabulary*, *explanation*, and *let's practice* sections, in another meeting he or she might teach *pronunciation*, *communicative activities*, and *listening*. In this situation, the teachers were given freedom to decide the techniques of teaching he or she would apply in the classroom. However, an attempt should be made to provide more opportunities for the students to be actively involved in the teaching and learning process. For example, the teacher might assign the students to work with peers or to have a small group discussion to maximize language practice. The fact that the seats in the classroom were arranged half a circle made the effort possible.

There might be a case that the scheduled sections of a particular unit (e.g. *conversation*, *vocabulary*, *explanation*, and *let's practice*) were too much or too little for

one meeting of 100 minutes. Should the teacher find the materials too much, he or she was allowed to skip some numbers in a particular type of exercise (e.g. by asking the students to work on even or odd numbers only). What the teacher should bear in mind was that all of the types of exercises had to be experienced by the students. When the materials were considered too little (meaning that more time was left), the teacher was required to use the rest of the time by working on materials from different sources as he or she liked. Or, he or she could give the students other activities such as games, songs, or riddles. Specifically in the session of independent study, the teacher served more as a facilitator for students who needed helps.

To summarize this part, both the coordinator of the IC program and the teacher had important roles in running the IC program. While the coordinator was responsible for the presence of a teacher in the classroom, the classroom teacher performed the actions to make the teaching and learning process really happen.

## Evaluation

As far as the purpose of the evaluation is concerned, several types of tests were given to the students. To evaluate the effectiveness of the IC program, the students were given a pretest and a posttest. These two tests used the same materials and covered tests of listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing, and speaking. The listening comprehension test consisted of 25 items of the following types: same-different (a sort of true-false, 5 items), completion (6 items), sentence rearrangement (6 items), and answering questions (8 items). The reading comprehension test consisted of 30 items that were divided into two parts. The first part contained six short reading passages each of which was followed by problems of two types: multiple-choice (19 items) and completion (6 items). The second part contained one reading passage followed by 6 items of true-false type (Intensive Course Program, 2000b; 2000c).

In the writing test, the students were asked to write a composition of about 200 words. The topic was “*what you have done to be admitted as a student of this English department*”. In the speaking test, the students were divided into groups of 5 to 6 people. Each student was given a story written on a piece of paper. Eleven funny stories were made available for this test. The stories were used to elicit student’s oral responses and the teacher’s questions were not meant to test student’s comprehension (Intensive Course Program, 2000d).

For the evaluation of the listening comprehension and reading comprehension tests, keys to the tests were provided. The raw scores for these two tests could be determined from the number of items. The highest possible score for listening comprehension test was 25, while the highest score for reading comprehension test was 30.

In the speaking test, fluency and communication ability were evaluated using a scoring sheet. *Fluency* refers to “the use of grammar, choice of words, pronunciation and intonation” (Intensive Course Program, 2000d). Fluency was differentiated into four levels: very fluent, fluent, average, and poor. *Communication ability* refers to “the ability to understand other people’s use of language and ability to make oneself understood by others” (Intensive Course Program, 2000d). Communication ability was divided into four levels: very communicative, communicative, average, and poor. From the best level to the worst, fluency and communication ability were valued from 4, 3, 2, to 1, respectively. The average score of fluency and communication ability would be the final score for speaking. The highest score for speaking test was 4.

The students’ composition was evaluated with regard to content, organization, and language use. Each component has its own criteria ranging from 4 as the maximum



level to 1 as the minimum level. In terms of content, students gained 4 for very relevant, 3 for relevant, 2 for not very relevant, and 1 for not relevant contents and details. Regarding organization, students gained 4 for very clear and systematically-organized ideas, 3 for clear and systematically-organized ideas, 2 for not clear and systematically-organized ideas, and 1 for confusing ideas. Concerning language use, students gained 4 for hardly any grammatical mistakes, 3 for very few mistakes, 2 for some mistakes, and 1 for many grammatical mistakes (Intensive Course Program, 2000d). The average score of content, organization, and language use components was the final score. The highest possible score for writing was 4.

To use the scores of the tests of the four writing skills further, an attempt was made to convert the scores to arrive at an overall raw score of 120. The distribution of raw scores was divided into four ranges. A student would get an A for a raw score of 104 or more, a B for 90 to 103, a C for 63 to 89, and a D for 62 or less. A statistical analysis was carried out to examine whether there were significant differences between the scores of the IC students in the two tests both in each of the teachers' college and in all of the teachers' colleges.

To examine the progress of the students in learning, formative tests were given. These tests were given at the completion of student's handbook 1 and at the completion of student's handbook 2. The tests materials contained reading comprehension, listening comprehension, vocabulary, and grammatical structures (Oka & Andreani, 2001b). However, it is important to note that when the second formative test was conducted some teachers' colleges had not finished student's handbook 2 completely because of scheduling problem. The scores of the formative tests were used by each of the teacher's colleges as further consideration to determine the success or failure (pass/fail) of the students in each teachers' college.

To evaluate the components of the IC program from the students' viewpoints, a questionnaire was distributed. The components included in the questionnaire were the materials, implementation, evaluation, and independent study. For the evaluation, the students were asked to give scores for aspects of each component. Four ranges of scores were determined, i.e. 90 to 100 for *excellent*, 76 to 89 for *good*, 60 to 75 for *fair*, and 59 or less for *poor*.

## **Program Administration**

The administration of the IC program can be divided into three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation.

In the preparation stage, the instructional materials (books and cassettes), testing materials, administration formats (e.g. sample schedule and logbook to record teacher's comments and correction), and the questionnaire were developed by the team of IC program at UM. The instructional materials and other items were sent to each of the teachers' colleges by the time they were needed. Prior to the implementation, a special time was arranged to provide information about IC program and training to the faculty members in each of the teachers' colleges. By giving workshop sessions, the problem that might be encountered in the implementation of the program could be detected and solved immediately.

In the implementation stage, the team of IC program from each of the teachers' colleges used the teaching materials for classroom instruction. This team might modify some administrative formats to accommodate the need of the teachers' college. Accompanied by faculty members of UM who visited each of the teachers' colleges, the team of IC program from each of the teachers' colleges carried out the pretest and

posttest administration. Following posttest administration, each of the teachers' colleges distributed the questionnaire for the students.

In the evaluation, computation of the scores for overall proficiency was done. The results were sent to each of the teachers' colleges. The eight teacher's colleges might use the resulted scores as a basis to determine student's success or failure in the IC program. However, if it did not fit the local needs, each teachers' college was allowed to include other sources of marks (e.g. formative tests or any form of local tests) to determine the final grade of the students. Unlike the analysis of the pretest and posttest that was done at UM, the analysis of the questionnaire was carried out at each of the teachers' colleges.

## Results of Implementation

This section presents the results of the implementation of the IC program based on the analysis of the pretest and posttest scores and the questionnaire data.

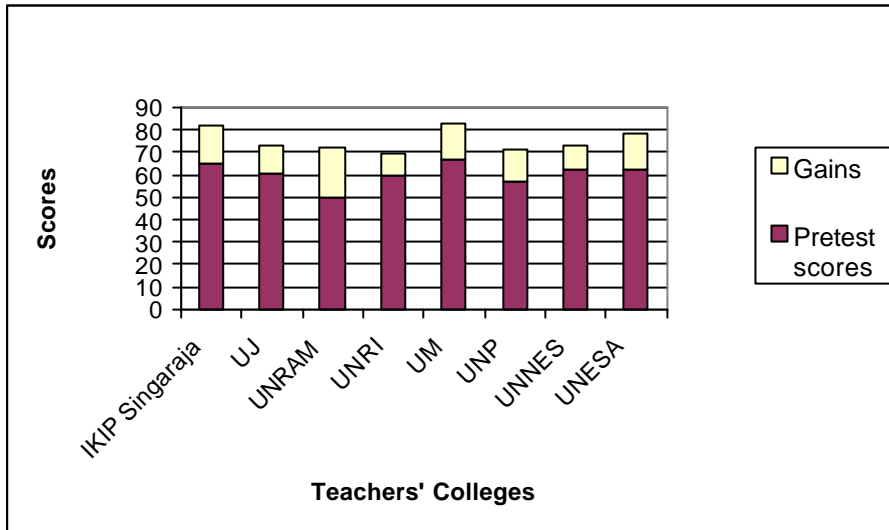
The computation of pretest and posttest scores indicated that in all of the teachers' colleges the posttest scores were higher than the pretest scores (Djiwandono, 2001). The lowest score in pretest was 22 and the lowest score in posttest was 34, while the highest score in pretest was 81 and the highest score in posttest was 109. The average score in pretest ranged from 49.83 to 66.68, while the average score in posttest ranged from 68.98 to 82.68. The scores in the posttest increased from 9.63 to 22.26. The gains of the students in the IC program in the eight teachers' colleges are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Gains of the students in the IC program in the eight teachers' colleges**

No	Teachers' Colleges	Gains
1	IKIP Singaraja	16.93
2	UJ	11.89
3	UNRAM	22.26
4	UNRI	9.63
5	UM	16
6	UNP	14.54
7	UNNES	11.24
8	UNESA	16.02

Comparison of the gains indicated that each teachers' college showed a different score increase. It is interesting to find that the highest gain was achieved by IC students of UNRAM. In comparison to other teachers' colleges, the lowest average of pretest scores was also achieved by IC students of UNRAM. The introduction of the IC program at UNRAM was likely to uplift the English proficiency of the students to a satisfactorily higher level (Sribagus, 2001). The second higher gains were achieved by IKIP Singaraja, UNESA, and UM. These three teachers' colleges also indicated the highest posttest scores. These three teachers' colleges have implemented the IC program for two years or more. The posttest scores that centered around 80 might indicate that experience in the implementation of IC program would lead to the success in improving

students' English proficiency. Especially for UM, the success could be a reflection of consistent efforts maintained from the earlier period of the implementation of IC program (Cahyono, 1994). The next gain was achieved by UNP. Considering the posttest score of the IC students of UNP and the fact that UNP introduced the IC program for the first time, the gain might be considered satisfactory. The last groups of gains were achieved by UJ, UNNES, and UNRI. Apparently, the posttest scores of these three teachers' colleges, along with those of UNP and UNRAM centered around 70. The comparison of gains of the students in the IC program of all teachers' colleges is exhibited in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The gains of the Students in the IC program of all teachers' colleges**

To examine the significance of the gains of the students in the IC program, *t* test statistical analysis was applied. Computation of the *t* values indicated that there were significant differences between pretest and posttest scores in each of the eight teachers' colleges. This means that the gains indicated an improvement in the students' English proficiency. The comparison of pretest and posttest scores of the IC students in each of the teachers' colleges is showed in Table 3.

The average scores of pretest and posttest from the eight teachers' colleges were counted. The average score of pretest was 60.73, while the average score of posttest was 75.67. The difference of the pretest and posttest scores was 14.94. The examination using *t* test indicated that the scores of pretest and posttest were significantly different. This indicated that the gains showed an improvement of the English proficiency of the students in the teachers' colleges. The comparison of pretest and posttest scores of IC students in all of the teachers' colleges is presented in Table 4.

**Table 3. Comparison of pretest and posttest scores of IC students in each of the teachers' colleges**

No	Teachers' Colleges	Test	n	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>
1	IKIP Singaraja	Pretest	42	65.08	12.58	6.44
		Posttest	42	82.01	11.5	



2	UJ	Pretest	46	60.78	11.7	4.53
		Posttest	46	72.67	13.42	
3	UNRAM	Pretest	58	49.83	15.18	8.00
		Posttest	62	72.09	15.27	
4	UNRI	Pretest	53	59.35	13.29	3.67
		Posttest	53	68.98	13.78	
5	UM	Pretest	96	66.68	12.47	9.32
		Posttest	99	82.68	11.47	
6	UNP	Pretest	92	56.65	12.9	8.42
		Posttest	92	71.19	10.4	
7	UNNES	Pretest	84	61.88	15.18	5.22
		Posttest	86	73.12	12.75	
8	UNESA	Pretest	144	62.29	12.74	11.25
		Posttest	146	78.31	11.47	

$p < .05$

**Table 4. Comparison of pretest and posttest scores of IC students in all of the teachers' colleges**

Tests	n	Mean	SD	Gains	t
Pretest	615	60.73	14	14.94	19.52
Posttest	626	75.67	12.93		

$p < .05$

As previously mentioned, in addition to the evaluation in the form of test, a questionnaire was distributed to the students by each of the teachers' colleges. Since the feedback of the students on aspects of the IC program was primarily for the local need of each teachers' college, complete data to describe the general responses of the students from the eight teachers' colleges could not be gained. However, it is worthwhile to examine the available data from a particular teachers' college to provide an idea about the tendency of the student's responses. For the evaluation of the IC program from the students' perspective, complete data from UM were gained (Oka & Andreani, 2001a).

The responses of the students of UM indicated that the IC material, the program implementation, the evaluation, and the independent study were evaluated as *good*. The average scores of the students on these four components were 79.5, 84.99, 77.81, and 77.02, respectively. With regard to particular aspects, the students considered that the IC program was *very important*, while they evaluated the scheduling and the teachers' attendance as *very good*. These three aspects were given scores of 93.47, 91.08, and 90.90, respectively.

Apart from the official questionnaire data intended to elicit students' evaluation of the IC program, two other sets of data were gained from two teachers' colleges. The first is evaluation of the IC materials from the teachers' perspectives provided by IKIP Singaraja (Program studi pendidikan bahasa Inggris STKIP Singaraja, 2001) and the second is students' evaluation of the teachers of IC program that was made available by UNNES (Agustien & Sisbiyanto, 2001).

The evaluation of the teachers of IC program at IKIP Singaraja focussed on the general aspects of IC program and the sections of materials in the student's handbook. In terms of the general aspects of IC program, all of the teachers (100%) considered that



the IC materials were *good* and many of them (75%) stated that the materials were *relevant* with the topic. In addition, all of them (100%) agreed that the student's handbooks and the student's workbooks were *well-designed* and *well-printed*.

In terms of the sections in the student's handbooks, half the number of the teachers (50%) considered the *conversation* section effective and meaningful. Furthermore, most of them (88%) stated that the *vocabulary focus* supported the topic, the *explanation* was clearly presented, and the *pronunciation* was relevant to the students' level of English proficiency. Additionally, many of the teachers (75%) considered that the *let's practice* section was presented concisely. With regard to *communication activities*, all of the teachers (100%) agreed that these activities were of communicative values and most of them (88%) agreed that these activities were relevant to the topic. Finally, most of the teachers (88%) stated that the exercises in listening section were relevant with the topic.

The students of IC program at UNNES evaluated nineteen teachers of the program. The results indicated that five teachers (26%) were considered *excellent* in teaching. Ten of the teachers (53%) were considered *good* in teaching, while the other four teachers (21%) were considered *fairly good* in teaching. Some characteristics given to the *excellent* teachers include *explains clearly*, *experienced*, *teaches interestingly*, *applies various teaching techniques*, *humorous*, *friendly*, and *smart*. The students also expressed some unfavourable characteristics that should be avoided by IC teachers. These include *superficial explanation*, *impatient*, *lack of innovation and creation*, *monotonous*, *book-oriented*, *too quick in finishing lessons*, and *neglecting students*.

It is evident from the evaluation that the gains of the students in the IC program indicated an increasing level of English proficiency. However, because no control group was involved in the implementation of the IC program, the result should be interpreted with care. There is a possibility that the gains were caused by factors such as the teachers, the number of credits, the materials which led the students to maturation, and were not caused by the IC program. Based on the available data from some particular teachers' colleges, components of the IC program and a number of aspects in the components were evaluated favourably by both the students and the teachers. Furthermore, most of the teachers from a particular teachers' college were evaluated as excellent or good teachers. Despite the positive evaluation, there were some constructive points of evaluation directed to the IC program. Feedback of the teachers as written in the logbooks and as expressed in the reports made by each teachers' college indicated that, among others:

- The number of credits and semester-hours should be reconsidered.
- Parts of the instructional materials need to be revised.
- Test materials should be related more closely to the instructional materials.
- Interrater reliability should be considered in the scoring of speaking and writing.

## Conclusions

The discussion of the results suggests that the gains affected the development of the English proficiency of the IC students at the eight teachers' colleges in a positive way. Since there was no control group involved in the implementation of the IC program, the findings should be interpreted with care. This is because of the possibility that the gains were the effects of maturation. Furthermore, apart from the significant gains along with the favourable evaluation of the components, the IC program bears some weaknesses. The number of credits and the number of semester-hours might not be

changed radically as these two elements represent the nature of the program, but a serious attempt could be done to modify parts of the instructional materials and some mechanisms in the process of evaluation.

From the experience of the author as a member of the team of the development of the IC program at UM working from the end of 2000 to the end of 2001, it is worthwhile to point out that revisions had been done in the written and recorded materials. The new version of the IC materials was used to teach IC program at UM in the academic year of 2001-2002. As the team of the revision of national curriculum of S1 English Language Teacher Education ended its duty in the year of 2000-2001, i.e. at the completion of the pilot project, it is unfortunate that because of funds, the results of the revisions were not completely distributable to other teachers' colleges, except some teachers' colleges that had made contacts with the team of IC program at UM.

It is suggested that the teachers' colleges maintaining the IC program keep up with the development of the program. Additionally, it would be best if the decision makers, especially those related to the implementation of the national curriculum for English language teacher education, provides some supports for on-going implementation of the IC program in the eight teachers' colleges in particular, and in all teachers' colleges in Indonesia in general. By doing so, the efforts so far conducted to improve the education of secondary school teachers of English will be fruitful.

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