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Students' and Lecturers' Experiences in Courses Provided for the English Thesis Defense Examinations

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Abstract

Thesis Defense Examination (TDE) is an assessment that most undergraduate students around the world have to pass in order to graduate from universities. Some students can pass the examination satisfactorily, while others fail due to their poor performance. In the EFL general context, the issue of poor performance of undergraduate students in the TDE conducted in English is a piece of common knowledge among lecturers as the examiners and students as the examinees. Within the Indonesian context, this study aims at investigating students and lecturers' experiences in Research Methodology (RM) (focusing on written competence) and Seminar on ELT (SoELT) (focusing on oral competence) courses, where the case was taken from the English Education Department of a public university located in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. By using a purposive sampling technique, we involved five students who have passed RM and SoELT, two lecturers who teach RM, and two lecturers who teach SoELT as the participants in this qualitative research. Interviews were employed to gather the data to address the investigation. We consulted

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Hyland (2004) for the analysis of the teaching and learning of written competence, and Alptekin (2002) to analyze the teaching and learning of oral competence in classroom activities. The results of the analysis show that there are matches and mismatches between what was experienced by the students and what the lecturers experienced. We also found that some activities in the courses hindered students from being competent in their performance in TDE.

Keywords: English, lecturers, oral competence, students, thesis defense examination, writing competence.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term Thesis Defense Examination (TDE) we use in our study is the oral examination conducted by final-year undergraduate students to present and defend their research in front of a board of examiners. TDE is known differently in universities in other countries. In the USA, it is called institutionalized pedagogical activity (Hasan, 1994). Common names for the TDE are also known as viva voce in the UK and public defense in most European countries. In Indonesia, the TDE is a term widely used for the final examination of a thesis written by undergraduate and master degree students. In addition, Samad and Adnan (2018) use the term script oral examination for the TDE of the undergraduate level. Within Australian education context, most universities implement written examinations of the students' thesis rather than oral examinations.

TDE (the term we use in our study) has been considered a genre in itself. Thus, TDE has interrelated elements that form the genre; the goal, steps/structure, members, terminologies, and assessment criteria (Swales, 1990). Genre is a goal- and staged-oriented activity (Butt et al., 2003). This suggests that TDE can be considered as a genre if it also has a goal and stages. The goal of TDE is for examinees to graduate from their universities and this event has some stages (moves) that members have to go through, for example preliminary, opening, defense proper, in-camera, and closing (Samad et al., 2017).

In addition, the segments of the TDE may differ from one university to another and from one country to another (Maingueneau, 2002) depending on the culture of the TDE of each university. TDE is an event generally conducted in front of a panel of examiners. There are commonly three to four examiners who attend/participate in this event to assess examinees on their arguments in the thesis. The other members are commonly the examinee(s) and audience(s). Moreover, according to Swales (1990, p. 26), genre acquires some specific lexis where community members share the technical terminology that are understood by one another, for example, the terms 'defense', 'presentation', 'in-camera segment', and 'research'. In this oral examination, the examiners assess the examinees' knowledge of thesis writing including their writing, communication, and research competence. To conclude from the elements of the TDE genre, there are important matters that examinees have to pay attention to: the goal of TDE, the stages of oral presentation in TDE that they have to pass, knowledge of the field research and TDE terminologies, the members attending the TDE, and the expectation of the examiners toward the examinees through the assessment criteria.

Students as the examinees in TDE need to be prepared with the aspects of the TDE genre before they gave presentations in TDE. We assume here that this preparation provided in the Research Methodology (RM) and Seminar on ELT (SoELT) courses helps the students to have good performance in TDE; thus, an investigation into students' and lecturers' experiences in the courses preparing the students for the examination is necessary.

Studies on TDE have been carried out by many researchers with different focuses. For example, there are those who focused on the assessment of TDE (e.g., Carter, 2008; García-Peñalvo et al., 2020; Guloy et al., 2020; Kiley & Mullins, 2004), the anxiety in TDE (e.g., Cooksey & McDonald, 2019; Samad et al., 2022; Susanto et al., 2015), the rhetorical pattern of TDE (e.g., Samad & Adnan, 2018; Swales, 2004), the purpose of TDE (e.g., Jack, 2002; Kiley, 2009; Maingueneau, 2002), the students' strategic competence in TDE (e.g., Herlambang, 2023; Samad, 2016), the use of Genre Approach to prepare students for TDE (e.g., Samad & Adnan, 2017), students' socio-psychological experience in TDE (e.g., Stubb et al., 2011), students' achievement and well-being experience in TDE (e.g., Sverdlik et al., 2018), and students' delay experience in TDE (e.g. van de Schoot et al., 2013). Of all the studies related to TDE and particularly to the experience in TDE in the literature, the studies that involve the experiences of students and lecturers in the courses preparing students for taking TDEs are very rare. Therefore, to fill the gap in the literature, our study focused on the experiences of both students and lecturers in the courses provided to prepare the students for the TDEs held in the English Education Department (EED) of Universitas Syiah Kuala (USK), which is a public university in Aceh Province, Indonesia. Our justification for this gap is that if the students and lecturers have different experiences in both courses, the aim of the courses to help the students perform well in TDE is hard to achieve. The findings of this study can be a reflection for the lecturers to improve the activities in the classrooms in order to help students prepare better for TDE events. To inquire about the experiences of both students and lecturers in the courses, we have created the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of students and lecturers in RM and SoELT courses?
2. How do students' and lecturers' experiences relate to students' preparation for TDE?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

TDE is a final oral examination undertaken by most university students in their final year, and it aims to assess their knowledge of research topics related to the study program they pursue. Samad et al. (2019) name this examination as Script Defense Examination (SDE) for undergraduate level and Thesis Defense Examination (TDE) for graduate level. In European countries, TDE is called public defense, while in the United Kingdom, the term viva voce is used (Hasan, 1994). Therefore, different terms are used in different countries for this examination. At the EED of USK, before following TDE in the final semester, the undergraduate students have the opportunity to prepare themselves to write their thesis and to do a presentation by enrolling in two different courses as discussed in the next section of this paper.

2.1 RM and SoELT Courses at the EED of USK

The courses provided by the EED of USK for its students to prepare for TDEs are RM and SoELT. In RM, the students learn research procedure from finding a problem to be investigated to the analysis of data. They also learn how to write a thesis from the title to the reference list. In SoELT, the students learn how to step-by-step present the research results that they have written in their thesis. Both courses are required for the students to perform competently in TDE. RM is offered in the fifth semester; meanwhile, SoELT is available in the sixth semester.

2.2 English Written Ability to Prepare Undergraduate Thesis

TDE is conducted after students write their thesis which contains some sections: from the cover section to the appendices section. A thesis is required to be written structurally and consequently to address the goal of a thesis which is to inform readers (in this case supervisors, examiners, and other researchers) of the research that has been accomplished by the students. Special terminologies in the research area are also used in their thesis as it is a component of a particular genre (Swales, 1990). Moreover, a thesis is academic in nature, and it needs to be written in an academic style. Therefore, writing ability is important for the students to master. The students in the context of our research major in English education. They are required to write their thesis in English as a foreign language; thus, English writing ability is of paramount importance. Since a thesis has its own goal, structure, and language features, a thesis is a genre itself. According to Hyland (2007), there are elemental genres (such as procedures, recounts, and narratives) and macro genres (such as lab reports and newspaper editorials). Elemental genres are also known as micro-genres (Samad, 2016). Meanwhile, macro genres are formed by the combination of elemental genres. In our research, we consider a thesis as a macro genre that consists of some elemental genres. For example, an argumentative approach is used to strengthen the argument for conducting research, and this argument is expressed in the introduction chapter; a procedure is used to write the steps of conducting research in the methodology chapter; and a discussion is applied to discuss the results of research in results and discussion chapter.

In the EED of USK, the students enroll in RM to help them write their thesis academically. Since a thesis is a macro genre, a genre-based pedagogy is applicable in this course because it helps students “produce effective and relevant texts” (Hyland, 2007, p. 148). In our investigation of the teaching and learning of the RM, we adopted the characteristics of genre pedagogy by Hyland (2004), including explicit, systematic, needs-based, supportive, empowering, critical, and consciousness-raising. These characteristics are required to be implemented in the course to prepare the students to write a thesis. The first one is explicit, which means that lecturers are aware of the knowledge that students need to learn so as to aid the students' acquisition of skills in writing a thesis. Besides, we have systematic as the second characteristic, in which the lecturers facilitate the students with a coherent framework to focus on the language and context of a thesis. Needs-based characteristics comes third, where the lecturers make sure that the objectives and contents of the teaching and learning are determined by what the students need to achieve. The next characteristic is supportive which places the lecturers in the central role to scaffold the students' learning and creativity

in the classroom. Genre pedagogy is also empowering, where the lecturers are able to present to the students the patterns in a certain text, in this case, the patterns of a thesis. Moreover, the lecturers provide valuable and important resources for students to understand how to write a thesis as well as be aware of the challenges of writing a thesis. Finally, consciousness-raising advances the lecturers' awareness of a thesis so as to positively prepare the students to write a thesis. All of these characteristics, if implemented by the lecturers, would help the students improve their ability to write a thesis. In our study, our investigation of the teaching of the RM relies on the characteristics of genre pedagogy.

2.3 English Oral Competence to Perform TDE Presentation

Competence in communication means that speakers and listeners can communicate with and understand each other. The speakers will be competent in speaking if their prior knowledge fits within the course under discussion. According to [Samad et al. \(2019\)](#), the success of communication depends on the speakers' understanding of the context and their ability to conduct a conversation. In relation to the competence in the TDE, examiners and examinees as members of intercommunication need to understand the field of research being discussed. In other words, both the examiners and examinees must have adequate knowledge about the topic.

In the Indonesian universities, the students whose major is English education are required to present their research in English at TDE. Similarly, the TDE conducted at the EED of USK obliges the students to give presentations in English; this means that they need to have sufficient spoken English proficiency. They are assessed in terms of their understanding of their research content and their oral performance ([Samad & Adnan, 2017](#)). English is also needed when they interact with the examiners. In TDE, the students, who have studied for approximately four years at the department, are expected to have sufficient ability to use general English to be able to competently communicate their experience and knowledge ([Samad & Fitriani, 2016](#)) related to their research.

To be successful in TDE, the students are required to have a wide range of competence in using a target language. According to [Alptekin \(2002\)](#), speakers will perform competently in speaking by mastering four competency areas: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. By having grammatical competence, the speakers will have knowledge of how to utter sentences in an appropriate grammatical structure. [Chomsky \(2006\)](#) points out that a speaker who is competent in using a language has mastered the rules of the system, which includes sound and meaning in sentences. [Shumin \(2002\)](#) argues that students who learn English as a foreign language must have an understanding of how words are used in sentences and how they are used in certain ways. A minimum understanding of grammar and vocabulary may influence their ability to perform well in communication, which later impacts their ability to deliver messages in a communication. According to [Shumin \(2002\)](#), students need to have the ability to maintain and terminate communication by using proper grammatical and lexical resources. In TDE, being responsive and attentive during an interaction with the examiners is important for avoiding boredom in communication and misunderstanding of the information exchanged in the presentation. A good understanding of

grammatical structures can help the students do these in TDE. By having grammatical competence, the speakers are able to reduce or control hesitation in communication (Boonkit, 2010).

Furthermore, it is the case that in TDE that students need to know what is expected by examiners. Therefore, they are required to understand the rules that govern appropriate timing and speech acts. Alptekin (2002) argues that speakers require an understanding of how the language is used in a particular culture; hence sociolinguistic competence is needed. In this study, the students are expected to understand the culture of TDE; therefore, they have to know the academic culture. TDE culture is associated with the process of the examination in sequence stages and also with the academic language including the terms used in the event. These are two of the aspects of TDE genre as a communicative event (Swales, 2004). Therefore, SoELT course should assist the students to be competent in the TDE genre to achieve effective interaction between the students and examiners based on the culture of TDE.

Speakers' understanding of the context of the discussion in the TDE is crucial; therefore, the speakers need to be competent in this discourse. Alptekin (2002) emphasizes that students can understand the ideas in a conversation when they are familiar with the context of the conversation, which will help them be competent in the discourse. For example, in the context of TDE, the students are expected to develop their understanding of the rules of cohesion and coherence that create meaningful communication. Turn-taking in communication between students and examiners happens if both parties have understood the communication rules (Shumin, 2002).

In addition to the three competencies that have been mentioned, strategic competence is also needed by the students in order to keep TDE running smoothly. Alptekin (2002) reports that students who have adequate strategic competence can maintain an interesting interaction, where they have the ability to deliver and express ideas and arguments (Burns & Joyce, 1997; Harvey, 2006). The students may have the ability to manipulate the language to meet their communication goals. By having this strategic competence, the students understand how to increase the examiners' willingness to listen to their presentations and to convince the examiners of the message being delivered. In TDE, this competence is required (Dönyei & Thurrell, 1991) particularly when the students need to use English as foreign language. It is important for non-native speakers of English to master this competence because it relates to the strategy of using the language. As far as communication is concerned, this strategy refers to the ability to understand appropriate timing, which includes when and how to lead the conversation and terminate the discussion (Shumin, 2002). The ability to present a thesis with full confidence within the specified time limit can be an example of strategic competence.

The grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies suggested by Alptekin (2002) discussed above are important to be included in the teaching of SoELT to help students increase their oral English performance, particularly in TDE. We assume that lack of information and introduction of the above competencies in SoELT could affect the students' preparation for TDE. Thus, a deep investigation into this matter is of paramount importance.

3. METHODS

This is a qualitative case study investigating the students' and the lecturers' experiences in the courses provided for preparing the students for TDE. This method was selected to dig deeper into the research problem from different angles. Consequently, the result could reach a rich and meaningful picture of a complete situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

It is often that qualitative researchers choose to sample non-randomly because they want to investigate from one particular sample (purposeful). To select purposive participants from the EED, we have set some criteria. The students that we chose were those who have passed RM and SoELT, and those who got a TOEFL certificate scoring 475 or above. The lecturers should have the following criteria; they are registered as the lecturers at the department, hold at least a master's degree certificate, have experience as the examiners of TDE, and have taught RM and SoELT courses for some semesters. For our study, four lecturers as the examiners in TDE (hereby called LRM1 and LRM2 who teach RM; LSE1 and LSE2 who teach SoELT); and five student-examinees (hereby called SUE1, SUE2, SUE3, SUE4, SUE5) were involved in this study. The number of participants included in this study was considered adequate as Dworkin (2012) says that small size is enough for a qualitative study to gather in-depth insight into a phenomenon being studied.

For the data collection, an open-ended interview was employed. The interview is believed to be very useful for gathering important information in terms of people's beliefs and perspectives about facts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Ten initial interview questions, followed by a number of follow-up questions arising during interview, were given to both the students and lecturers to inquire about their experiences in RM and SoELT. An audio recorder was used to record the conversations between the researchers and the research participants in the interviews. The interview was conducted in-person with each participant using the Indonesian language and then translated into English for the purpose of presenting the excerpts in the result section of this paper.

The data was analyzed in four steps as suggested by Creswell (2009) after the interview recordings were transcribed. The first step was the organization of details about the case; the specific 'fact' about the case was arranged in a logical (chronological) order. We listed chronologically all the activities that occurred in RM and SoELT courses based on the lecturers' and students' experiences. The next step was the categorization of data to identify the categories that can help cluster the data into meaningful groups. In this case, we classified the data from the participants pertaining to the teaching and learning of RM and SoELT and their relations to competence in written and spoken English based on Hyland (2004) and Alptekin (2002), respectively. The third was the interpretation of single instances. Specific occurrences and other bits of data from the interview were examined for the single meaning they might have in relation to the case being investigated. The fourth was the identification of patterns. The data and their interpretations were scrutinized for underlying themes and other patterns that characterized the case more broadly than a single piece of information can reveal. The last one was the synthesis and generalization. An overall portrait of the case was constructed. Conclusions were drawn that may have implications beyond the specific case that was studied.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings regarding the preparational courses for TDE. To discover whether the preparation courses help the students prepare for TDE, the concepts of written ability and oral competencies are used. The assumption is that the students will be able to perform competently in a specific genre if the competencies are adequately taught in the courses.

4.1 Teaching and Learning Activities in RM Based on Lecturers' Experience

In the RM, the students should be introduced to the writing of the cover, title, abstract, keywords, introduction, literature review, research methodology, result, discussion, conclusion, and reference section of their thesis. Based on the results of the interview, this study found that one lecturer of this course taught the students how to design a power-point presentation. He claimed that this is required because the students mostly used power-point slides in the real TDE; the quality and the impressiveness of that presentation are given marks. As quoted from LRM1:

- (1) For RM, we commonly taught the students how to design a power-point presentation, covering information about the research content. (LRM1)

This lecturer focuses on power-point design because the presentation slides are also assessed by the examiners in the real TDE. We argue here that creating a power point slides are also important, but the students have to finish writing their theses first before they can create the slides. When they were undertaking this course, none of them had started writing a thesis yet. So, how could they create a PowerPoint? In relation to genre pedagogy mentioned by Hyland (2004), we assume here that the teaching of the RM by LRM1 was not explicit because the lecturer was not aware of the students' need to acquire thesis writing skills; not systematic, because LRM1 did not provide the students with a coherent framework to write a thesis; not needs-based because LRM1 did not suit teaching materials with the students' need to write a thesis; supportive to be the central role in guiding students' activity in creating PowerPoint slides, but not to write a thesis; not empowering because LRM1 did not give access to the students to know the patterns of writing a thesis; not critical because the resources that LRM1 gave to the students did not help them write a thesis; and not consciousness-raising because LRM1 did not advise students on how to write a thesis. Overall, the teaching that was conducted by LRM1 did not reflect the characteristics of genre pedagogy in relation to preparing the students to write a thesis as the objective of the course.

Another lecturer, LRM2, focused on teaching the students about writing paragraphs, such as identifying important elements in writing paragraphs and writing short paragraphs in an academic style, as quoted from LRM2:

- (2) I taught them some important elements of academic writing. For the practice, I gave them a task to write about Universitas Syiah Kuala. The students were expected to describe the parking and the procedure for paying tuition fees. (LRM2)

The quotation above indicates that LRM2 prepared the students with writing skills, such as introducing important elements in writing a paragraph. He also

encouraged the students to understand the writing elements through writing topics around them. Academic writing, which was taught by LRM2, was important for the students, particularly for those who are going to write a thesis because a thesis is academic in nature. Unlike LRM1, LRM2 provided the students with scaffolding instruction to increase their English written skills. However, if we look at the topic, LRM2 did not focus on the writing of thesis elements, which was the goal of this course. The selection of the topic of “the parking and the procedure of paying tuition fees” did not have a relation to the scope that the students had to write in their thesis. The genre pedagogy characteristics of explicit, systematic, needs-based, supportive, empowering, critical, and consciousness-raising as mentioned by Hyland (2004) did not appear in LRM2’s teaching because the main objective of the teaching, which was to increase students’ English written competence in writing a thesis, could not be achieved.

From the discussion of the teaching focus in the RM in this section, it can be summed up from LRM1 and LRM2 that in teaching this course, some lecturers did not teach the students in accordance with the course objective, which was the thesis writing. The activities mentioned by the two lecturers above are important; however, the activities done in the course needed to achieve the goal. LRM1 taught the students to create PowerPoint slides for presentations; this activity could somehow guide students to write some points in their slides with correct grammar. However, this activity could not help the students write a thesis sequentially. Similarly, the activities conducted in LRM2’s classroom only helped the students to write academic texts on different topics, but not to write a thesis or a thesis proposal.

4.2 Teaching and Learning Activities in RM Based on Students’ Experience

Based on our analysis of the data, the essential information on research writing in this course was found to be inadequate. Some students did not have this information in this course. This was experienced by one of the students, SUE5, who stated:

- (3) We were not taught how to write a thesis in detail. In this course, we focused on how to design teaching materials for our teaching practices. (SUE5)

The quotation above shows that the students were not prepared to write a thesis, but they focused on preparing the teaching materials for their teaching practice at an appointed school. In fact, the preparation of the teaching materials is usually done in a course called Micro Teaching, not in the RM classroom. This study assumes that the material taught by the lecturer as mentioned by SUE5 was not appropriate. Moreover, SUE2 informed that she did not know how to conduct research. In her quotation, she said:

- (4) We did not know how to conduct research because we were not introduced to a format or a structure of the thesis writing even though we were asked to write a minor thesis. (SUE2)

This student tried to explain two things: one is a normal thesis, and another is a minor thesis. Moreover, SUE4 experienced the same thing as can be seen in her response:

- (5) The lecturer asked us to write a minor thesis and present it in front of the classroom. (SUE4)

Meanwhile, SUE1 and SUE3 responded that they were taught how to write academic writing in RM course, as quoted from them respectively:

- (6) We were shown some materials on how to write academic writing. The lecturer also taught us about coherence and cohesion. (SUE1)
- (7) I remember that the lecturer taught us how to write academic texts, where we need to refer to some scholars when we argue or define something. Referencing style is also included in the teaching. (SUE3)

The responses given by the students have indicated that there were various activities done in the classrooms. Some activities such as writing academic text and a minor thesis were correlated to the objective of the course, while some others such as designing teaching materials were not related to the course objective. We conclude here that the characteristics of genre pedagogy were very slightly implemented in the teaching of RM at the EED of USK based on the students' experience.

4.3 Teaching and Learning Activities in SoELT Based on Lecturers' Experience

The focus of SoELT is to improve the students' presentation skills for performing in a TDE and conferences. As mentioned by [Alptekin \(2002\)](#), to be competent speakers in communicative events including a presentation, students need to have grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence, as also claimed by [Samad and Adnan \(2018\)](#). The results of the interview show whether the lecturers include these competencies in their teaching of the course.

Introducing presentation skills in SoELT is important. According to a lecturer, LSE1, during his teaching in this course, he focused mainly on presentation skills including opening, delivering, and concluding presentations. As quoted from LSE1:

- (8) In SoELT, I taught the students how to open and deliver important points in the presentation, as well as how to close it. (LSE1)

From his response, LSE1 taught the students to present their research. In the presentation, before delivering the research contents, the students learned how to open the presentation. LSE1 also taught the students the important points they need for delivery when they present their research. Similar to the opening of the presentation, LSE1 also taught the students the way to close the presentation. These presentation steps are helpful for the students to perform competently in a TDE. This lecturer encouraged the students to practice their research presentation skills by applying the steps. In addition to the steps, LSE1 also asked the students to select their own topic of interest for the presentation practice. As he further said:

- (9) I asked the students to select one topic of interest to be presented in the course. I gave them the freedom to find their own topics unless they had any difficulties, whereupon I gave them alternative topics. (LSE1)

LSE1 assumed that by choosing their own topic of interest, the students would be eager to talk about it in a presentation. This eagerness might encourage them to talk more in the presentation practice. However, the students may be confused in choosing an interesting topic. In this case, LSE1 nominated some topics that the students may

choose. Whether it was their own topic or a topic from him, the students still needed to practice the presentation in the classroom. With a frequent practice in the classroom, the students were expected to make improvements in their presentation skills, which is important for performing in a TDE.

Based on LSE2, the presentation practice in the SoELT classroom was designed like a real TDE, where one student acted as the presenter, while some other students acted as the examiners, and the rest of the students formed the audience. Some questions were asked by the appointed examiners, as stated further by LSE2:

- (10) I asked some students to sit in the front. I asked one of them to make a presentation. Some students were appointed to ask questions. These students had to listen carefully to the presenters in order to ask questions. The rest of the students acted as the audience/listeners. A timekeeper was also appointed during this practice. We created this course to be like a real TDE. I focused on developing the students' speaking skills to present their research results because I assumed that the students had been taught the content of the research in the RM which they undertook in a previous semester. (LSE2)

By assigning students to SoELT classroom to act as presenters, examiners, and audience, the students could learn real-like TDE situations. Firstly, the students were informed about the members of a TDE and the roles of each member in the event; secondly, the students were informed about how to present their research in front of examiners, for example, how to open, deliver, or close the presentation. We found out from the analysis that one thing was missing from the teaching, which was the information about the assessment criteria used by the examiners to assess the performance of the students. In a TDE, the assessment criteria are used to determine the level of students' understanding of their research topics and it is one of the elements of the TDE genre (Swales, 1990). Information about assessment criteria is important to make the students aware of what will be asked in TDE; however, this information was missing.

The responses from both lecturers showed that they have prepared students with presentation skills. LSE1 focused on general presentation, while LSE2 specifically focused on a defense-proper segment of TDE. If we relate to their preparation for TDE, LSE2 prepared the students better than LSE1 because LSE2 directed the students' presentation to the real-like TDE, while LSE1 did not focus on TDE presentation. We conclude from LSE2's responses that he included the teaching of grammatical competence where the students learned how to deliver their presentation using appropriate sentences in an appropriate grammatical structure, sociolinguistic linguistic competence where the students learned the language used in TDE culture, discourse competence that taught the students the communication rules between examiners and an examinee in a TDE such as the opening, delivering, and concluding the presentation, and strategic competence which is important for the students to know how to interactively deliver and express ideas and argument. LSE2's teaching in SoELT included the competencies remarked by Alptekin (2002), which are important for the students to increase their oral presentation skills to perform in TDE.

4.4 Teaching and Learning Activities in SoELT Based on the Students' Experience

Two participants from this university, SUE1 and SUE4, said that the lecturer in their classroom asked the students to make a presentation about any interesting topic. SUE1 acknowledged:

- (11) We were asked in the course to make presentations, one by one, of a proposal or paper, as an individual task. We also had a group task to do a presentation on the course. These tasks were then submitted in writing to the lecturer. (SUE1)

From this quote, it is understood that for the individual task, each student had to present his/her research topic to the class, which they had written in the form of a proposal. For the group task, the students had to write and present the results of their group discussion to the other groups in the class. Similarly, SUE4 shared her experience in SoELT by saying:

- (12) In SoELT classroom, we were asked to explain what we had written in our proposal in front of the classroom and the other students asked questions. The lecturer did not ask questions at all. (SUE4)

This quotation indicates that the lecturer only encouraged the students to speak up about their research proposal/topic. They learned how to do presentations by watching their peers. In preparing the students to be more focused on the need to perform competently in the TDE, the lecturer also assigned the students to do an oral presentation based on a given topic. SUE2 stated that:

- (13) In SoELT class, the lecturer gave us a topic and that topic was expanded and presented individually, but the students were not taught the stages of presentation. (SUE2)

A similar process was also experienced by another examinee, SUE5, whose lecturer gave the students one topic that was then discussed in a group, as quoted from SUE5:

- (14) In the course, we were given presentation materials and a topic title which were from the sections of proposals and we were divided into groups. Those groups whose topic was about action research had to present and discuss that topic. (SUE5)

In this course, each group discussed a different section of the proposal; one group discussed the research methodology and another group discussed the literature review. These different topics were determined by the lecturer. This means that the students were given opportunities to practice making presentations in front of the class. Providing opportunities for the students to practice doing presentations is a good way to teach SoELT. However, in the group presentation, it seemed that the students did not do a whole research presentation; instead, they only presented one part of the proposal. This practice was actually not enough to make the students familiar with doing a full presentation.

Presenting a senior's research proposal, or the thesis of a past student (an alumnus' thesis), was the third practice of oral presentation in some SoELT classrooms at this university. According to SUE3, in the classroom she attended, the lecturer

encouraged the students to find an alumnus' proposal or one chapter of a past student's thesis to be presented in front of their colleagues in the course. SUE3 noted:

- (15) In this course, the students were encouraged to find a proposal from one of their seniors, or a chapter from a previously presented thesis, and present it to the class. (SUE3)

Based on the quotation above, it is good that the lecturer encouraged the students to be confident in making a presentation of someone else's thesis. The research proposals or theses that the students used to do presentations in the class were the ones that had been approved because they had fulfilled the criteria required by the department. The structure of their presentation was based on the structure and the content of that proposal.

Another student, SUE2, also reported that the students in SoELT were asked by the lecturer to present an alumnus' proposal. However, the lecturer assigned this task only at the end of the semester. SUE2 said that she did not have enough knowledge about presentation skills because in the previous classroom meetings, the lecturer never guided or asked her and her peers to practice TDE presentations as quoted from SUE2:

- (16) Only at the end of the semester, the lecturer asked us to find a senior's research proposal and to design a PowerPoint presentation. All of us were shocked because we had never been asked to do so it previously. In regular meetings, we did not discuss an alumnus' research proposal but rather discussed teaching materials. (SUE2)

From this quotation, it can be seen that the lecturer in the course discussed how to prepare materials for teaching English, such as materials for teaching speaking, reading, writing, listening, and grammar. This practice helped the students only to understand how to select and design materials and strategies to teach students but did not help them to prepare for better presentation performance in the TDE. The teaching material was not suitable for teaching the course. Moreover, the lecturer suddenly changed the materials by asking the students to find a senior's research proposal to be presented in the classroom. It is inappropriate for a lecturer to firstly not teach according to the focus of the course and secondly change the teaching materials only at the end of the course.

The research presentation conducted by the students was a free presentation in the classroom, which means that the students were not given instruction or the format of a presentation to follow. For example, the presentation should start from the background and then be followed by other information in the thesis. SUE5 stated that:

- (17) Based on my experience, we were not given a research format where we had to start with the information of the research background, research problem, hypothesis, and so on. (SUE5)

SUE5's response indicates that the students were not introduced to the systematicity of presentation that they should follow for the elements of a proposal or a thesis. In this case, the students may start with presenting the research problem rather than the research background because they did not know the right order of the presentation.

From the above discussions of the activities in SoELT classrooms, we can assume that most lecturers focused on the students' oral presentation as the goal of the course. It means that the lecturers demanded their students to increase their oral

presentation skills which, in fact, suited the objective of the course. However, if we look at the competencies required by the students to perform well in an oral presentation as suggested by Alptekin (2002), the students' responses show that most lecturers did not include grammatical competence in their teaching where they actually need to teach students how to utter sentences and special terms used in TDE in an appropriate grammatical structure. Moreover, sociolinguistic competence was not included in the teaching because, from the responses given by the students, we know that the lecturers did not teach the students the rules and stages of presentation in TDE and the expectation of examiners in students' presentation in TDE; in short, the lecturers did not explain the students the culture of TDE.

In addition, the SoELT lecturers participating in this study did not include in their teaching discourse competence where the students needed to know the context of the discussion in TDE between the lecturers as the examiners and the students as the examinees. We assume so because the lecturers did not create real-like TDE presentations in the classrooms. Finally, strategic competence was also missing in the teaching of SoELT. Based on the responses given by the students, they were not taught the strategy to maintain an interesting interaction and to deliver and express ideas and arguments. The lecturers seemed to achieve a small part of the goal of the course, which was to make students able to present research, but the students' understanding of the competencies of oral presentation particularly in TDE was still inadequate. Consequently, this condition led the students to being less confident to defend their thesis in TDE because they were unsure whether or not they were doing it correctly for the research presentation in the TDE.

5. DISCUSSION

The summary on the lecturers' and students' experiences of the teaching and learning activities in RM and SoELT have indicated the matches and mismatches as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Matches and mismatches of teaching and learning activities in RM and SoELT.

RM course		
Lecturers' experience	1	Design a power-point presentation covering information about the research content.
	2	Identify important elements in writing paragraphs. Write short paragraphs in an academic style.
Students' experience	1	Design teaching materials for teaching practices.
	2	Write a minor thesis and present it in front of the classroom.
	3	Write academic writing.
SoELT course		
Lecturers' experience	1	Open, deliver, and close a general presentation.
	2	Select one topic of interest for a general presentation.
	3	Present a real-like TDE presentation.
	4	Present research results.
Students' experience	1	Present own research proposal or research paper.
	2	Present a given section of a proposal.
	3	Present a senior's proposal.

Based on Table 1, general matched information in both courses is presented in Table 1. For example, the lecturers and students said that they taught and learned about writing a proposal in RM and in SoELT, the students practiced a research presentation. Nevertheless, what some lecturers taught in RM was not closely related to the objective, that is to help the students improve their written competence in writing a thesis/a proposal. For example, LRM1 taught the students how to design PowerPoint slides for presentations. In the classroom, she gave marks to students based on their attractive slides. Another lecturer, LRM2, focused on writing paragraphs with familiar topics around the students' lives, for example, writing about parking at campus. The students needed to obtain knowledge, rather than just organizing the slides and writing paragraphs. They need to have an in-depth understanding of thesis writing skills as a macro genre (Hyland, 2007) related to their research writing, which consists of elemental genres: the introduction, the literature review, the research method, the results, the discussions, and the conclusion. This understanding, based on genre pedagogy by Hyland (2004), should be explicitly fulfilled by the lecturers in the classroom. In addition, there were also some activities mentioned by the students that were not mentioned by the lecturers, for example, designing teaching materials (which were absolutely not related to the objective of the course) and writing a minor thesis. This indicates that there was a mismatch between the materials provided and the expectations of the course and a mismatch between the lecturers' and students' perspectives on the activities in the classroom. Consequently, the objective of the course, which was a written competence, could not be fully achieved by the students. This would also lead to the students' poor performance in TDE because their written competence was also assessed in the examination (Samad & Adnan, 2018; Samad et al., 2017).

In SoELT, the lecturers taught the students presentation skills but the contradictory responses were found among them. LSE1 stated that he taught the students presentation skills such as strategies to open, deliver, and close a general presentation, not focusing on the TDE presentation. Another lecturer, LSE2, said that he focused on a real-like TDE presentation. Here we notice the mismatch in terms of teaching materials and focus given by different lecturers in the same course. According to the students, they all had a proposal presentation about their research topic or seniors' research topic. There was an indication that the lecturers did not have a standardized syllabus, which resulted in teaching different materials. The mismatches in standardized syllabi and learning focus could also be the reasons for the students' poor performance in TDE. Moreover, the lecturers of SoELT needed to teach oral competencies suggested by Alptekin (2002), particularly oral competencies in TDE. Moreover, the real-like (life) TDE that some lecturers included in the activities should include all elements of the TDE genre as mentioned by Swales (1990). Because different institutions/departments have different stages of TDE (Maingueneau, 2002) depending on the culture of TDE in each institution/department, it is important for the lecturers in the corresponding institution to introduce the stages of TDE to the students and practice a real-like TDE in the classroom. From the mismatches, the importance of involving feedback from both lecturers and students in all teaching and learning activities needs to be highlighted (Perera et al., 2008).

6. CONCLUSION

The students at USK have an opportunity to prepare themselves for TDE by enrolling in two courses: RM which aims at improving students' written competence in writing thesis and thesis proposal, and SoELT aiming at improving the students' oral competence, particularly in research presentation. Based on the analysis of data from the interviews with the lecturers and students, we found that some lecturers did not fully help the students achieve the objective of the courses and they did not have a standardized syllabus to teach in the classroom. Consequently, the students could not fully prepare themselves for TDE, and this would lead to their poor performance in the examination. A better teaching plan should be made so that the objectives of both courses can be achieved and the students can be well prepared for TDE.

This study is limited to investigating the students' preparation for the English TDE by looking at lecturers' and students' experiences in teaching and learning of RM and SoELT courses at the English Education Department of USK. Further studies are suggested to conduct a classroom observation and also observation of the TDE events and observe how the preparations in the classrooms affect students' performance in the TDE, particularly in different universities of different countries.

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