

Students' Perception of English Learning toward Their Current Professions

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ABSTRACT

Globalization era demands employees who have a proficient English skill so that international business activity can run well. University as a place which provides a skillful employee is forced to create a practical English learning. However, it is not an easy task to bridge the demand and reality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Based on pre-observation, it was revealed that some of students were not able to implement the knowledge that they have learnt into their current work. Related to the issue, researchers conducted research to find out students' perception on what they learn related to English study and how it affects their current job or profession. The participant of this research were the seventh semester students of English Literature of Pamulang University. They were chosen as participants using purposive sampling. This research itself was conducted at English Letters Department of Pamulang University from December 2020 to January 2021. In conducting this research, qualitative research was chosen as research design. There was one type of data collecting techniques which is questionnaire. The data were analyzed simultaneously using Creswell's (2007) theory called data analysis spiral in order to get a strong and comprehensive conclusion toward the issue.

Key words: current profession, English learning, students' perception

INTRODUCTION

In the globalization era, the role of English language in career and job is important. Although career advancement demands more than just language proficiency it has become supplement for professional recognition. For instance, in some of the ASEAN countries, mastering English well will affect salary in workplace. It is reasonable since

globalization opens an opportunity for many businesses to go international and join open market. So, a capable human resource who has proficient English mastery can be a real helper since the employee can handle international businesses. Moreover, since English becomes main international communication tool, the demands of mastering English language is increasing from time to

time. The use of English in the work place becomes more significant due to many technical terms in economic, finance, business, and administration use English as medium of instruction. Therefore, many companies obligate English as requirement for applying a job.

Many researches on classroom and higher education focus on connection between English proficiency and profession. It can be understood since the discussion on globalized market has been blossoming recently. It triggers a big question: are the human resources especially in developing country ready? Globalized market demands employees who can do day-to-day business and it happens in international community. They must be able to send emails, chat, deliver presentations with proficient English since tiny error will not be tolerated in business etiquette. As the result, higher education as place that trains human resource needs to design its course in order it can work in line with the market demand.

Regarding the issue, education is forced to provide a new perspective on teaching-learning activity especially in higher education environment. It means, in the area of education, university faces a challenge to bridge a conventional education which in the old day was based on significant theoretical based to the practical area. It is important since the occupation area demands more practical knowledge that is already made useful and easily to engage into workplace. However, it is not easy to bridge theoretical based learning toward

practical learning since not all university has vocational department with experts in business and corporate field. As the consequence is inconsistent relationship between English teaching and application of it into field work.

In Pamulang University, particularly in the Department of Letters, many students already have occupations when they enrolled to the university. Since they have worked, their mind has been fulfilled with expectation toward the course and classroom learning that they will deal with. Unfortunately, based on pre-observation, which was conducted by researcher, it was found that some of students were not able to connect the course and learning that they gain into their profession or career. They seem difficult to see the implication of how learning certain material can affect their career or support their current job. Although, some of them were quite proficient and can cope with the learning material, they have difficulty in seeing the connection between the material that they learn in the classroom and current job that they hold.

Based on the interview conducted in pre-observation, the problem happens because some of the students are lack of awareness in choosing their major. On the other words, students do not have a goal in the first place. A goal is important to drive a person toward a success endeavor. Goals can be operationalized as internal or external aspects that guide a person to see more or fewer choices in his or her environment (Cordova & Lepper,

1996). Having a goal can effect students to a clear and systematic action that affect positively to their learning performance. It supported by goal setting theory which claimed the simplest and most direct motivational explanation of why some people perform better than others is because they have different performance goals (Latham, 1991). Students who do not have a goal will be stuck in the difficulty to follow a learning pace. As they do not have idea why they need to learn English and where the knowledge will lead them into. Having goal is crucial in learning since it can trigger motivation. Students with strong motivation tend to success language learning rather than the one who do not have.

Another problem is students' learning mindset. Some students are reluctant to connect what they have learnt into the real work. They still see study as formality to achieve certain degree without much focusing on experience and knowledge they have gained. The university and lecturer of course have an intention that learning is not only theory but also how to apply the theory in a real practice. As the result some of the student who are unable to transform classroom experience in actual their work will seem lost in learning. However, this problem is not merely based on students' foul. Lecturers also need to evaluate are they already have provided an integrative teaching and learning which is meaningful and relevant for the students. An interrogative teaching and learning help students to see clearly what

practical value that students can take from learning certain theory or knowledge.

Based on the background and problem stated, researchers focus on exploring students' perspective toward English learning course toward their current profession. This research tried to reveal what students perceive toward the course that they have learned. This research tried to uncover whether they to their reason in learning and their goal in learning. Finally, this research intended to see whether the course affect their current job and how it happens. The research was conducted in seventh semester students of English Literature Department of Pamulang University in academic year of 2021/2022.

The existence of perception is undeniable. Perception is one of psychological aspect in which related to our point of view toward certain phenomenon around us. For instance, certain people will have certain perception toward particular condition or situation around them or that they know. The perception can be positive or negative it depends on each individual. As stated by Sinaga (2018) that derived from the Latin word '*perceptio*', perception refers to the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment. As well as Slameto (2010: 102) states that perception is a process related to acceptance of information by human brain during the process a person continually interacts with his or her environment. Lamatokan (2018) also mentioned that

perception is people's opinion about something that they are thought is true. It means that perception refers to someone sense or view toward a certain object. Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that perception is a person's judgment or assumption toward certain environmental phenomenon happens around him/her. From that concept can be conclude that perception can lead that person to move to a certain direction based own his/her perception. Therefore, it is important to have or shape a perception that can support learning process.

According to Sinaga (2018), perception does not appear by itself but through processes and many factors affect one's perception. This causes why everyone has a different interpretation despite seeing or facing the same thing. As Robbins (2003) mentioned that there are three factors that affect perception. The first factor is called the perceiver which can be defined as a person who uses her/his senses to be aware of things or events. In this research, the students are the perceivers. The second factor is the object or target which is being perceived. English learning is considered as the object of perception in this research. The third factor is the context of the situation in which the perception is made. It refers to the surrounding environment or the situation that influences the establishing of a person's perceptions.

In Indonesia, English is considered as a foreign language which means that English is not a dominant language. Sulistiyo (2016)

mentioned that English in Indonesia is more likely to be taught and learnt only as a foreign language. This means that learning and teaching English occurs mostly in classrooms, rather than during daily communication. English learners in Indonesia do not have ready access to using English as a tool of communication during their daily lives outside the classroom. English as a foreign language in this context is a language learnt only during formal education. There are few opportunities for learners to employ English as the target language outside the classroom because the language is not used as the main device of communication among people. Thus, English language teaching and learning in Indonesia presents particular challenges that are not encountered in countries where English is more commonly used on a daily basis.

There are several challenges that teachers must face in teaching English as a foreign language. The first one is dealing with sociocultural factors impacting EFL instructions. These sociocultural factors can be social and cultural norms in particular context. According to Shah, Hussain, & Nasseef (2013) these social and behavioral norms are indicative of classrooms unique complexities. For instance, the beliefs and expectations of parents, institutional managers and policy makers, and the relationships between the participants in the classroom are all determined by the sociocultural norms of a particular context which influence the classroom environment, and make it more complex and diverse.

Besides sociocultural factors, English teachers must also deal with their classroom challenges which may include limited instruction time, large class sizes, mixed ability classes and various development needs, high expectations from students and parents, lack of resources, inappropriate textbook material, students' low proficiency, odd contact hours, and lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments. In EFL classrooms, teaching practices are influenced by restrictions imposed by institutional authorities. For these reasons, Shah, et al (2013) mention that teachers constantly switch between pedagogically and socially oriented behaviors and try to meet the learning and social needs of the learners. Thus, EFL teachers imparting various skills find it quite challenging to choose the right method that would suit the learners' needs and their learning style.

Not only teachers, the EFL learners must also face several challenges. One of which is motivation. Motivation plays important role in English teaching learning because it helps the teachers and learners to achieve objective of the learning. As Purnama, Rahayu, & Yugafiati (2019) state that motivation is the influential factor in learning activity. Without having motivation, goals of learning is hard to be achieved because the students' effort and desire affect the learners in achieve the learning goals. By getting motivation students will be spirited in learning process, so they will be shoved to comprehend English well. In brief, when student motivation is good, the

learning achievement can be good as well. However, students' motivation could vary depending on students' perceptions and intention of learning a foreign language.

Some students learn English due to external goals such as passing an examination, financial rewards, and a better career. For example, English is one of the compulsory subjects to be taught at all levels of education in Indonesia and the students must pass it. In this case, some of the students learn English to pass the subject, not because of their personal needs or goals.

The word "profession" might have different meanings to different people. Traditionally, a profession can be defined as the occupation or job for living. Australian Council of Profession (2003) defines a profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards. This group positions itself as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognized body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and is recognized by the public as such. A profession is also prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others.

English is also considered as knowledge and skills that plays important role in someone's profession. Roshid & Chowdhury (2013) state that a competitive employment market requires good communication skills in workplaces. Within that, increasingly under globalization, English as communication skills plays a crucial

role in employment all over the world. Proficiency in English therefore, is needed for employees to advance in both local and international companies and to improve their technical knowledge and skills.

METHOD

In conducting this research, researchers used qualitative method. The reason in choosing qualitative research as the design of was because the researchers tended to explore students' perspective. Understanding how people react of perceive toward certain phenomenon in social context is the strong point of qualitative research. As it was claimed by Cresswell (2014) who said that qualitative research is a mean for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or group ascribe to a social or human problem. During the research process, the researchers collected the data by using questionnaire.

The data collecting processes were done in one month considering the schedule and length of the activity. The research took place in the University of Pamulang particularly in seventh semester of English Letters Department of Pamulang University in academic year of 2020/2021. There were some reasons why researchers chose the research setting. First, researchers saw a problem in the research setting which inspires this research. Next, researchers had a wide opportunity since they are lecturers in English Letters Department of Pamulang University. Third, Pamulang University specifically English Letters

Department provides course in teaching English as foreign language where some of the students have already work. Therefore, it was easier to see their perspective on the English course and how it will affect their current job.

Participants of this research were the students from Sociolinguistic class. The students were from the seventh semester of English Literature Department of Pamulang University in academic year of 2020/2021. The reason why researchers chose the participants was because they have already had jobs and they have learned English in Pamulang University for about three and half years. By duration, researchers believed that participants had acquired a fix perspective toward the English course that they had learned.

Researchers only chose necessary sampling that supported the current research. It means the research did not take the whole class as the subject of the research. Therefore, researchers used purposive sample as the foundation of selecting sampling. According to Sugiyono (2011) Purposive sampling is technique sampling that based on some consideration. It means, the researchers decided the sampling based on their subjective consideration. In this case, researchers chose several participants whom they think were the best candidate and suitable for the research.

Data Analysis

In conducting the research, researchers went through several sequences as follow. At the very beginning, research selected the representative sample. The

representative sample was gathered using purposive sampling, which was applied in seventh semester of Sociolinguistic class, English Letters Department of Pamulang University in academic year of 2020/2021. Next, researchers explained the purpose of the research to the selected participants. Furthermore, researchers administered the questionnaire. After processing the data which gathered from questionnaire, in the final sequence, researchers analyzed the data.

In analyzing the data, research used Creswell's (2007) theory which called data analysis spiral. It means, the data will be processed through three stages. First is organizing and familiarizing. Next, it will go through coding and reducing, and the last stage is interpreting and representing. In this research there was one main data, the data was collected by using questionnaire. In the final process, after interpreting the collected data, researchers concluded the finding.

Triangulation

In the academic research, data need to be evaluated to get an ideal data. In the qualitative research, data validation can be done using a method called triangulation. Based on Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2012) "Early on, social scientists borrowed the concept of triangulation to argue for its use in the validation process in assessing the veracity of social science research results." It assessed the sufficiency of the data according to the convergence of multiple data resources or multiple data collection procedures.

It means triangulation is a method to validate the data in a social science research. The current research considered as social science research; therefore, the method is suitable from validating the data in this research. According to Creswell (2012), triangulation can be applied in three ways. First it can be done by collaborating evidence from several different individual.

Another way is by analyzing various data source. And the last one is approaching the data by using several data collecting technique to ensure the validation of the data. The last type of triangulation method was used by the researchers in this research. As mentioned before that this research used one kind of data collecting technique which was questionnaire.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

There were 9 participants in this research. All the participants have been experiencing working while studying in the university. They work in variant field of career. The chart below shows the percentage of how long the students have been working.

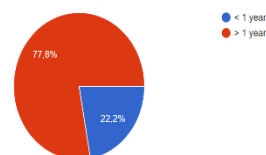


Figure 1. Students' Length of Working Experience

The fact shown above is to make sure that all participants are suitable as the data sources. Their opinions provided good information on students' perception of English learning toward their current profession. The researchers obtained the data using open ended questionnaire. The raw data were gathered, analyzed, and concluded by researcher to produced three main finding. The first finding is many of the students claimed that their lesson is less significant applied in their current work.

The second finding is they stated that English subjects which they have learned are helpful in their job. The last finding is students suggested that teaching process need to be adjusted or updated to their need as a learner and a worker as well.

In this section of discussion, the researcher presented and elaborated the finding. As stated before, there are three findings. Each of the findings is elaborately explained below.

The English learning or English subject is less significantly applied in participant's current Work.

Based on the data analysis, the researchers interpreted that majority of the students said that their lesson is less significant applied in their current works. The finding was supported by the quotation sample which was obtained through semi-structured questionnaire below

P: "Not much, but more confidence in speak English or writing

letter/email/presentation in English."

As it can also be seen from the following quotation:

P: "just 10% conversation."

From the data above it can be generated an understanding that most of the participant agree the lesson they have learned through teaching and learning process cannot be applied in their current work.

However, researchers found it can happen due to several reason as it is also quoted form the questionnaire such as difficulty to understand the lesson, time management problem, monotonous online learning or too students centered learning process.

The participant said:

P: "Time, it is because I take working class so the study is very limited time."

As it has been cleared, those participants are students who works during their study. Learning takes a lot of afford not only to internalize the content but also to see the correlation of it within real life of the learner. As the students learn, they need to see how it can be applied in their life. If they fail, it can make them absent to see how all the subjects applicable. From the data above it can be seen that participants dealt with internal issue which is time management. They cannot cope up with the balance

of learning and working in the same time. It can be one of the reasons why the subjects are less applicable in their work.

Another possible reason is monotonous learning process. During the pandemic, teaching and learning are shifting from interactive face to face teaching into online learning with all of the limitation. Online learning seems the solution to continue learning activity which contains some issues such less interactive process and monotonous format of teaching. Using online learning, lecturer can reach students mostly not in real time since the online teaching in asynchronous mode.

We can imagine, students ask a question but the response will take time or even neglected by lecturer due to overwhelming condition. Because of the conditions, the content or value of learning tends to be deliver incompletely. As the result students cannot achieve a comprehensive understanding how the subjects that they learn possibly can be applied in their work place.

English subjects are helpful in participants' work.

Another finding is the subject that participants have learned in the classroom can help them. It can be in term of solving the task that they have given or project they have dealt with. The finding came from participants' response on the question "Do you think subjects that you have learned helps you in your current job? Why! Most of the participants gave positive perspective toward it. They said it does

help much. As it can be seen from sample of participant's response below:

P: " Yes, i think so. Because I work in the world of education and the subject I choose is very closely related, which still includes education."

Moreover:

P: Yes, very helpful, because my job is always related to service, and sometimes I get foreign customers."

The finding above is quite interesting since participant gave positive feedback toward the questions in the questionnaire and it is quite opposite form the first finding. The question arising from this condition is how can the participants stated two opposite opinion toward two question that pretty much will have the same response. The first question is "How much knowledge from your learning that you can apply in your workplace?" and second question is "Do you think subjects that you have learned helps you in your current job? Why". We can imagine if participants cannot apply the subject then they were supposed to say that the subject they learned does not help much. As well as when they say the subject that they learned help much means it can be applied in the their

workplace. However if we analyze it deeply, we can see that participants come from English Literature department. It means they deal with many subjects related to literary work not merely English. The participants can possibly applied English language knowledge such as productive and receptive English skills but they failed to applied subject that related to literary. As the result, the questions in the questionnaire had different feedback.

In addition, the condition above can be understood since most of the participants are not in linier field or work with their major. Although they are passionate about English and literature and know what they want they still stuck in a job they are dislike as it is supported by the response from questionnaire below:

P: Honestly, it is not my dream job. I have a dream job that I can travel while working.”

As well as the following response:

P: Honestly, my current job isn't my dream job. Because since childhood and until now, I have a dream to become a doctor and work in the health world. Because it feels good to be able to help sick people in the best possible way.”

Teaching process need to be adjusted or updated to the needs of learners.

Since pandemic teaching learning through online process is a challenging time for students. Students and lecturer are encouraged to engage and adapt to a new ecosystem of teaching and learning. Based on the finding, most of the participants are not welcome to a new mode of teaching. They tend to face difficulty in absorbing information or lost during learning process. As the result, most of them have the same perspective that teaching technology need to be upgraded so it can be more interactive to them. As it was stated in the participant's response below:

P: Actually for now, looking at the current conditions, I hope that all stakeholders in the world of education will remain enthusiastic in carrying out the teaching and learning process even though it can only be done just by online. I hope with the more sophisticated technology will make the teaching and learning process more effective to be implemented.”

And:

P: Maybe lecturers can give us more time to do the online learning and other assignment, so we can having focus.”

Another perspective, participants claimed the learning materials must be developed as close as possible to their need. It can be in form of material and process of learning which can be more meaningful in term of it can be used in the students' real life who study and work at the same time.

CONCLUSION

This research aims to investigate students' perception of English learning toward their current profession. As it was found that there are three perspectives shown by students. The first perspective is the English learning or English subject is less significantly applied in participant's current work. However, another perspective presents that English subjects are helpful in participants' work. Meanwhile the final perspective describes that teaching process supposed to be adjusted based on learner need especially for those who learn and work at the same time.

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