

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARD THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AT UNIVERSITAS TEUKU UMAR

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the students' perception about the effectiveness of teaching English at Universitas Teuku Umar from non-English major students. Data were collected from the students of six faculties: Economics, Social and Political Science, Fisheries and Marine Science, Engineering, and Agriculture. A number of 120 participants were selected from each faculty by using the random sampling technique. The instruments used included questionnaire and interview guide. The data were analyzed qualitatively following four effective learning criteria; material, learning method, learning motivation, and classroom management. The results showed that (1) some students were still dissatisfied with the materials given since they were hard, (2) the teaching methods used did not stimulate the students to learn English well, (3) some students did not like learning English because they could not speak like native speakers, and (4) the lecturers paid little attention towards the students' questions and rarely did they give rewards to their students such as praising for students' achievement. Further, the students' obstacles in learning English included lack of vocabulary, problem in pronunciation, and grammar difficulty.

Keywords: effective teaching; teaching english; non-english major

INTRODUCTION

English courses for the students of non-English majors are called English for Specific Purpose (ESP). In general, ESP consists of English for Academic Purpose (EAP), with the purpose of learning English for academic needs, and English for Occupational Purpose (EOP), with the purpose of learning English for work needs (Putri, 2010). ESP is a compulsory subject at the universities in Indonesia in every department. The English course at some universities, such as at Universitas Teuku Umar (Teuku Umar University), basically directs students in dealing with the demands of the working world. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) as cited by Ahmed (2014, p. 4) explain that “as a specific approach to language teaching, ESP required that all decision as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning”. Therefore, ESP is an approach of teaching which emphasizes students’ need based on certain purpose.

There are two types of teaching English in Higher Education. First, as a non-English general course which is one of the means of developing science being studied by students based on the field of study. Second, English is learned as the subject for students and should be studied more deeply. Teaching English at Universitas Teuku Umar as a general course for non-English students requires them to understand English terms particularly related to their field. In addition, according to Salkind (2008) learning English at higher education is more emphasized on reading skills than any other skills. This is because students have to read various lecture material sources in English related to the subject in their field. Therefore, students need to master English so that they are able to obtain relevant information in their respective fields.

However, based on the researchers’ observation, the students at Teuku Umar have not been able to apply English well despite having learned English for six years in both junior and high school. Most students have difficulty in understanding vocabulary and are passive in learning. Consequently, they were not motivated to learn more deeply. Ideally, the students should be able to master much vocabulary after years of learning English. In addition, the students’ awareness of learning a

foreign language is still so low that it affects them in learning English in the classroom. The previous research conducted by Barnes and Lock (2013) who investigated the effectiveness of teaching English for the non-English major of Women University, South Korea, found that the students who learned English in the University expected friendly, care, and patient lecturers as well as a personal relationship between students and lecturer. On the other hand, lecturers should have involved the students in the classroom by asking questions and providing time for them to take part in classroom activities as they were important to activate the students' involvement in the classroom.

Departing from above discussion, the researchers formulated the research questions as follows: (1) What is the students' perception towards the effectiveness of teaching English at Universitas Teuku Umar? and (2) What are the students' obstacles in learning English at Universitas Teuku Umar?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective Teaching

Harris and Duibhir (2011) state that language teaching is called effective if the teaching method or practice used can improve the proficiency and acquisition of students in the language. In addition, teaching that is not based on the effective and efficient method can make students become so bored that it affects the achievement in absorbing the knowledge taught.

Effective teaching involves a student-oriented teaching and learning process. Kreber (2002) explains that effective teaching is a teaching that is able to motivate students, conveys concepts, and helps their difficulties in learning. According to Saroyan et al. (2004), teaching in college requires a clear concept of the material delivered and understands how to convey it to the students. Therefore, teaching in college is more emphasized on knowledge and presentation. Moreover, effective teaching that is a more dominated teaching by students and teachers is required to be able to manage the learning process in order to generate students to learn by both motivating and understanding the difficulties faced by students.

According to Muijs and Reynolds (2005), the effective method for teaching includes direct teaching that is popular with the term of Active Teaching or Whole Class Teaching, which refers to the teaching style where the teachers actively carry out the instruction for their students by teaching directly to the whole class. There are some reasons why direct teaching is more effective than individual approach, including (1) teaching the whole class enables the teachers to interact directly with each student, (2) students' involvement is higher than individual teaching, and (3) teachers can create various activities or change them to react their students' boredom and lack of understanding to the material. The followings are some elements of direct teaching as suggested by Muijs and Reynolds (2005):

1. The instruction is taught explicitly
2. The explanation is delivered structurally and explicitly
3. Giving explicit model toward a skill or procedure
4. Conceptual mapping
5. Interactive questioning

The criteria of effective teaching in higher education are understood to comprise particular skills and practices applied within particular contexts. English is one of the general courses that should be taught by English lecturers to the students of Universitas Teuku Umar. English as a foreign language is often a frightening specter for students.

In relation to the education field, the students' perception is important mostly for a teacher who wants to know how successful teaching of students is and also can be used as an evaluation material in English learning. Therefore, an investigation about the perception of teaching effectiveness is important because teachers and students have different views about what should happen in the classroom even though the students are not confident in their abilities. Without confidence, learning motivation and effective learning will not be achieved (Dörnyei, 2001).

Young and Shaw (1999) as cited by Devlin and Gayani (2010) describe six components in effective teaching: (1) the value of a teaching material, (2) motivated students, (3) a comfortable atmosphere class, (4) the composition of teaching materials, (5) effective communication, and (6) focus on students. In addition, Hativa, Barak and Simhi (2001) write that the four dimensions of effective teaching include clear interest, explicit, good organization, and positive classroom condition. Besides, the learning material is also one of the important aspects as a stimulus that gives some effects on learning motivation. Brown (2000) proposes five learning principles based on the cognitive side:

1. Automaticity

Both adult and children learners acquire the language subconsciously without overanalyzing the form of language. An effective second or foreign language learning involved a timely movement of language forms into the automatic processing of unlimited language form.

2. Meaningful learning

Meaningful learning refers to subsume new information into the existing structure and memory system which result in the associative link and stronger retention. The power of meaningful learning is symbolized by appealing students' interest, academic goals, and career goal.

3. Anticipation of Reward

Reward plays an important role in learning. It helps the students to see why they are doing something clearly and what its relevance to their long-term goal in learning English is. The reward can be in the form of compliments and supportive actions.

4. Intrinsic Motivation.

Intrinsic motivation encourages successful learning because the behavior comes from need and desire.

5. Strategic Investment

This term refers to the strategy that the learners employ to internalize and to perform the language. Successful mastery of a second or foreign language is due to the learners' investment of time, effort, and attention to the language.

Effective teaching is highly in need of the involvement of both students and teachers in teaching and learning activities. Therefore, effective teaching should engage the students thoroughly since learning not only emphasizes the final outcomes but also the learning process. In other words, the lecturers must focus on the students during the learning process.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in April and May 2018 at Universitas Teuku Umar. The population of this research was all 1,197 students of the university of 2017/2018 academic year from all faculties: Economy, Agriculture, Public Health, Fisheries and Marine, Social and Political Sciences, and Engineering. The sample taken was only 10% of the population of 119 participants, who have already taken English course at the first or the second semester. They were selected randomly to represent the whole participants from each faculty.

The questionnaire used consisted of 40 closed ended questions while the interview had six questions related to the material, learning method, learning motivation, and classroom management. Both instruments were written and/or spoken in Indonesian rather than in English so that all participants could fully understand and complete it well. The questionnaire was analyzed manually for its descriptive statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Students' Perception towards Teaching Process.

In the response to the first research question, the finding in the following tables shows the overall perception of the students about teaching English.

The Material

Here is the students' perception in terms of material satisfaction provided by the lecturers in teaching English.

Table 1.

Students' perception about English material

No	Item	Option (%)		
		Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	The leaning goal is clear	100	0	0
2	The material given during a semester runs smoothly	93.4	6.6	0
3	Additional materials (photocopy, powerpoint, audio etc.) help me to increase the understanding in learning English	100	0	0
4	The material meet students' need	100	0	0
5	The material is interesting	93.4	6.6	0
6	The material is easy	26.7	20	53.3
7	The lecturer guides the students	100	0	0
8	The material given is explicit and helpful	86.6	0	13.4
9	The material helps to stimulate students' motivation	66.6	13.4	20
10	The lecturer reviewed the material every meeting	73.4	26.6	0

The results of the data analysis in Table 1 show that almost all students agreed that the purpose of the lectures given by their lecturers was clear and the additional materials provided helped to improve their understanding of learning English. Similarly, the material described was detailed and very helpful in understanding the materials. However, under 70% of them agreed that the given English material was able to stimulate their motivation and 26.7% of them assumed that the material given in the class was not easy. However, almost 60% students disagreed about the material provided was easy. It seemed to be a consideration for the lecturers that the material should be reviewed and equaled with students' proficiency.

Based on the problem discussed above, the students got hard in understanding material because they had lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge even though they were satisfied with the material provided (above 50% students agreed that the material was interesting, explicit and helpful, motivated). During interviewing with the students, the result shows that they did not like grammar because of having different patterns from Indonesian language. Moreover, they did not know the meaning of vocabulary. They still claimed that grammar was

symbolized with rule and memorization. It is line with Jing's study (2010) which found that limited vocabulary as their problem in learning language. Based on the result of study of Al-Nouh, Kareem, and Taqi (2014), the students had vocabulary and grammar problem because the teacher might ask students memorize the rule in the essay grammar test. To sum up, majority of students indicated that they have positive response. Brown (2000) suggests that grammar should be taught inductively because of some reasons. It is more keeping natural acquisition since the rules are absorbed subconsciously and it builds intrinsic motivation by allowing students to discover the rules by themselves without being told earlier.

Learning Method

The table below shows the students' perception of the learning methods used by the lecturers in the teaching and learning process:

Table 2.

Students' perception about English learning method

No	Item	Option (%)		
		Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1.	The lecturer introduces syllabus and explains the learning contract in the beginning of meeting	100	0	0
2.	The lecturer stimulates students to learn English	86.6	6.8	6.6
3.	The lecturer discusses more in classroom and responds the questions	86.6	13.4	0
4.	The task given relates to the material learned	100	0	0
5.	The lecturer understands the material will be taught	93.4	6.6	0
6.	The learning methods used vary to achieve learning goal	100	0	0
7.	The lecturer challenge students to do their best task	53.4	26.6	20
8.	The teaching pattern encourage students to learn	73.4	26.6	0
9.	The lecturer does learning evaluation	80	13.4	6.6
10.	Feedback given enable to increase students' motivation	100	0	0

Based on the students' perception of English teaching methods in the classroom, it can be concluded that most students agreed that "the lecturer introduces the syllabus and lecture contract at the beginning of the meeting", "the task given in accordance with the material", and "the method used varies to achieve the learning objectives ". Moreover, almost 100% of students agreed that the lecturers understood the material well and 86.6% of them agreed that the lecturers stimulated them to learn and discussed and responded their questions. Nearly 80% also agreed that the teaching patterns of their lecturers were able to stimulate the students' interest in learning and to conduct learning evaluations. However, only 53.4% of them disagreed with the statement "lecturers challenge students to do their best work". So, 20% of them assumed that lecturers were not challenging to do their best work. The challenge here can be in form of reward or score.

From the result above, it can be concluded that the lecturer should be evaluated. Goodman et al. (2011) argued that individual perception of reward and task has a greater impact toward the successful learning and academic achievement. It can influence the level of effort the students put when engaging the task that leads to better performance.

Learning Motivation

The following table describes the learning motivation of the students in learning English.

Table 3.

Students' perceptions about learning motivation in English

No	Item	Option (%)		
		Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	I study English to help to understand book, journal and film	80	0	20
2	I want to learn English because I want to know foreign life style	86.6	0	13.4
3	I learn English because I want to know the people around the world	73.4	6.6	20
4	English opens my mind	53.3	26.6	20

5	I want to learn English because I want to know foreign culture	66.6	13.4	20
6	I want to learn English to increase my language skill and capacity	100	0	0
7	I think what I have learned is applied in daily life context	100	0	0
8	I want to learn English because I want to speak like native-speaker	66.6	13.4	20
9	I am able to reach the learning target	73.4	26.6	0
10	I learn English to support my future career.	100	0	0

The result shows that 80% students responded that English was used to understand book, journal and film. This as Nababan (1994) says that the students have to read various lecture material sources in English related to the subject in their field. Therefore, they have to learn and understand English well. In addition, more than 50% students were so care about foreign life style and their culture that the students really want to learn English language. Besides, around 70% of them desire to be able to communicate with foreigner around the world and want to speak like native-speaker too. Furthermore, all university students of Universitas Teuku Umar agreed that by learning English their capacity in language skill could be increased and their future career could be supported. This statement is in the same line with Putri (2010) that the purpose of learning English is for work needs. In addition, Mahu (2012) writes that English is “a tremendous asset for your professional career” especially for them who want to develop their career at firms or other companies where English language will be used in communication.

From above finding, it can be highlighted that the students dominantly have a good motivation in learning English. However, some students still got unachieved target score because they recognized that they had bad level of knowledge in English in their senior high school (Jiménez, 2018). In conclusion, many participants were influenced by external motivation because of the reasons above. Yet, Brown (2000) remarks that intrinsic is the most effective motivation when learning.

Classroom Management

This following table illustrates the classroom management in teaching and learning process:

Table 4.
Students' Perception about Classroom Management

No	Item	Option (%)		
		Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	I know how much I involve in classroom	73.4	13.3	13.3
2	I know what I have to achieve in learning English	86.6	0	13.4
3	I cooperate with other friends when group working and doing the task	86.6	6.7	13.4
4	The lecturer pays attention a lot to my question than others	53.4	26.6	20
5	I got a lot of guidance from lecturer like my other friends	80	6.6	13.4
6	I got much encouragement from the lecturer during learning English	80	20	0
7	I got the feedback from my mistake	93.4	6.6	0
8	I got equal opportunity like other students to involve in classroom	93.4	0	6.6
9	I got reward and score from my work	40	33.4	26.6
10	I got the same opportunity to respond the lecturer's question like the other students	93.4	0	6.6

From the results of the data, it is found that nearly 100% of the students were involved in the teaching-learning process, as they received a lot of encouragement and feedback, had equal opportunities to engage in learning, and answered questions from lecturers in the classroom. Nearly 90% of them understood what to accomplish in learning and they worked with each other in both group work and individual task. 80% of them agreed that they had enough encouragement and guidance from the lecturers like other friends while studying in the classroom, but only 73.4% of them realized how much of their involvement in the classroom. Under 60% of students realized that many lecturers responded to their questions and less than 50% of them got praised for what had been done.

In this case, Brown (2000) says that reward plays an important role in learning. Moreover, Wächter, Lungu, Liu, Willingham and Ashe (2009) add that the reward gives some effects on students' behavior. It is believed that praise is one of reward can influence students in studying English especially as foreign language. From the finding above, it can be concluded that some students still were unsatisfied with the reward from the lecturer since their lecturer rarely scored their work, rarely responded their question and guided them. Instead, reward helps the students to see why they are doing something clearly and its relevance their long-term goal in learning English (Brown, 2000).

The Students' Obstacles in Learning English

In responding the second research question, there were some problems in learning English: firstly, they had lack of vocabulary. Based on the interview result, it was revealed that they found the unfamiliar words and the words that they needed to learn were numerous. Besides, the students found difficulty in choosing appropriate meaning of the word since knowing the words involves more than knowing their dictionary meaning. Consequently, the students were still confused to use the appropriate words based on the context. The second problem is the students had a difficulty in pronouncing the words. It was caused that the written form of the word was different from the spoken form in English. These sound spelling mismatches are often caused by the lack of similar sound between English and students' native language. It means that there are different pronunciations between written and spoken form of English. Unlike English, the Indonesian words are pronounced exactly as they are written. The last issue is the students had a difficulty in understanding the English grammar.

Since English is learned as a foreign language in Indonesia, the students undoubtedly meet difficulty in learning the structure of the language. As stated by Dekyser and Sokalski (1996) in Shiu (2011), grammar difficulty relates to comprehension and production. It means that in some cases, grammar structures are easy to comprehend but difficult to produce. However, in other cases, it is difficult to comprehend but easy to use. The result from interview showed that some

students faced difficulty in forming the sentence when relating to tenses. They used inappropriate verb forms in formulating a sentence because of lack of knowledge about grammar. This might happen because of lack knowledge of the target language environment and lack of motivation. Because English is learned as a foreign language in Indonesia, there is no real contact with the target culture, and the lecturers and classes are the main sources for the learners. Consequently, the students felt unmotivated to learn English.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that the students have had positive responses toward the teaching of English at Universitas Teuku Umar. However, the present English taught as English for Specific Purpose (ESP) still has not achieved the learning goal. Most students were also dissatisfied with the given material since it was hard for them, the teaching method used did not stimulate them to learn English, some students did not like learning English because they were not confident enough, and the lecturers paid little attention toward the students' questions and they rarely gave rewards to their students' achievement.

It should be mentioned here that since English is viewed as a foreign language in Indonesia, it is recommended for foreign language lecturers apply various interesting teaching methods that can solve the students' learning difficulties since the difficulties may also be affected by a particular method used, and adapt the methods with the actual teaching environment. On the other hand, English Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers should address their learners' concern in planning the activities in classroom such as providing the material based on the students' needs and level. The material should stimulate them to learn. Lastly, lecturers should also give rewards and respond to the students' questions as Goodman et al. (2011) state that rewards and task have a greater impact toward the successful learning and academic achievement.

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