LEARNERS' BELIEF OF HOW TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP)

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Abstract

The role of English as a foreign language drives it to be an interesting case to study. The case is not only in its linguistic aspects but also the pedagogical and psychological aspects. One of the interesting matters in English for Specific Purposes is the learners who are considered as the center of instruction. This research attempts to answer What are learners' beliefs how to develop themselves to become successful ESP learners?

To answer the research question, the study employed a phenomenology research study with two data sources: interviews and classroom observations. This study involved five technical college students to represent various perspectives about developing successful ESP learners. The teachers were interviewed once and the classroom activities were observed during the lesson.

The findings of the research reveal three points. The first, ESP learners develop proper character values through the ESP instruction. Secondly, successful ESP learners are able to maximize learner variable that is a number of indicators which already attached to every learner before the learners experience a learning program. The third, successful ESP learners are able to develop learning variable that is a number of indicators to be mastered by a learner in a learning program intensively and extensively.

Keyword: learner, belief, successful, ESP.

I. INTRODUCTION

The position of English as an international language encourages some societies especially in expanding circle countries think that mastering a foreign language is seen as beneficial base for a person's future. The position of English as the largest language used universally in the world affects English determined as a compulsory course in every level of education including the higher level, university or college. Being taught in every education

level, English learners particularly university students formulate a number of beliefs about English. The beliefs include the nature of English and developed into how to be successful learners of it.

In the world of English learning practice, questions arise to what matters make learners achieve low achievement and some master English successfully. Thus, investigating the phenomenon about learners' belief of how to develop their competency to become successful English learners is necessary. The investigation becomes more necessary since the objects of this research are the students of technical university in which the English learning need is English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) becomes the concern of this research considering that the demand of technical graduate students grows increasingly. It happens due to the high number of industrial sectors requiring ESP educated employees as the goal of ESP is to assist students in acquiring and applying English in actual academic, business, and professional situations (Al-Mumaidi, 2009; Dudley-Evans & John, 1998). The ESP students are developed to master target performance competencies that considered having more sufficient English which used in the real work context. By having so, they are expected to be able to work more effectively and efficiently than those who achieved general English.

Nowadays, English is taught in Indonesia in almost all levels of education, starting from very young learners to university students. Considering the limitation in terms of time, area, and methodology, this research attempts to focus on technical university students.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Learners' Belief

Defining the nature of a belief is such an uneasily thing to capture since it is unobservable thing and has unlimited scopes. Describing beliefs is as if using an analogy that beliefs are as if a scene which figures out dissimilar viewpoints. In other words, a belief is actually resulted from different ways a person stands point an object. Firstly, Senior (2006: 12) defines belief as "personal convictions (passions) about language teaching and learning that learners are able and willing to express". Similarly, Richards and Lockhart (1996) argue that beliefs are regarded as the extraction of what the learners understand and assume to be the right one. In foreign language learning, learners' belief has been principally treated under two major groups approaches, namely the cognitive and the socio-cultural orientation (Gabillon: 2005). Briefly speaking, in the context of teaching and learning, learners' belief

refers to the values learners assume as the extracted principle on how they formulate the objective of learning and how to achieve it using their preferred ways.

B. Successful English Learners

A learner is determined as successful indicating by some factors. Brown (2001) uses the term 'good' to express the quality of successful. He mentions relevant factors contributing the success of English learners; 1) discovering their own technique in learning English, 2) arranging information about language, 3) resourceful in using grammar and word, 4) using chance as maximally as possible to practice English inside and outside the classroom, 5) understanding expression by context instead of by word meaning, 6) using mnemonics and other tools and strategies to help recalling what is already mastered, 7) identifying errors and making errors work for the learning improvement, 8) using linguistic knowledge including a mother tongue and second language knowledge to learn a foreign language, 9) utilizing contextual signs, 10) attempting to make reasonable guesses, 11) attempting particular tricks to keep talking going in a dialogue, and 12) studying various types of conversations and text and modify their language based on the context of formality.

In the same way, Grifftiths (2008) cites that a successful English learner should have high motivation, proper school age, preferred learning style, proper personality, gender regard, metacognition, developed autonomy, appropriate personal learning beliefs, cultural experience, and language aptitude. Those factors are called as learner variables. Different from learner variables, learning variables are such elements to be mastered by a learner while learning a language. Proposed by the same author, Grifftiths (2008) mentions that learning variables consist of vocabulary, grammar, language function, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing, teaching/ learning method, strategy instruction, error correction, and task completion.

C. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

As a matter of fact, ESP is different from general English. ESP concentrates more on language in the thematic context than the grammar and language structure. The objective of learning in ESP is not merely integrating the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing but need analysis based. In designing an ESP instruction, grammatical functions, acquisition skills, terminology, specific functions of discipline content are crucial. Even though ESP differs to general English, general English language content should also be integrated into the course since (a) content-related language cannot function without (b) general English language content (Chen, 2008). So (a) and (b) are integrated in such a way that students get both. In line with Chen, Swales (1992:300) proposes a description about

ESP. He states that ESP is "the program for people requiring an analyzed language to meet and practice a predictable range of communicative needs to".

Furthermore, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p.125), propose the concept of need analysis as follows

1) Professional information about the learners

2) Personal information about the learners

3) English language information about the learners

4) The learners' lacks

5) Language learning information

6) Professional communication information

7) What is wanted from the course

8) Information about the environment in which the course will be run

ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learners. Meanwhile, the target of ESP is divided into the learners in processing developing expertise and the learners have been already experts. The English communication skills are regarded as tools in their training for the developing expertise learners. Meanwhile, the English communication skills are regarded as the tools in work for the experts.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach was selected for this study as a way to provide insightful and through investigation of attitudes, beliefs, and strategies the students develop themselves to become successful ESP learners. Specifically, the research applied a phenomenological study to conceptualize students' belief by identifying the phenomena toward their English proficiency. According to Van Manen (2007) phenomenology is a project reflecting the lived experience derived from consciousness of human existence which is thoughtful thoroughly and sensitive to the life-world exploring how human involvement with their world. Creswell (2007) adds that the data in phenomenology can be collected from individuals with related experience through qualitative data collection techniques. In this research, in-depth interview and observation were chosen as the techniques. The participants in this study were five English students of technical college. The researcher calls them as research informants since the main data were from the in-depth interview. They were under the pseudonyms of Dede, Yosep, Indra, Mas'ud, and Defa. The

five informants are regarded as successful ESP learners from their mark of English I and classroom involvement.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The beliefs investigated by the learners are classified into English instruction, learners variables, and learning variables.

A. English instruction

To elaborate the English instruction discussion, the first identification falls to the nature of English. Most informants share that English is an international means of communication that might the people entire the world have a good relationship. Besides, for ESP students, English instruction is intended to prepare them to be ready entering a work field due to the most manual book and standard operating procedure (SOP) are written in English.

About the position of ESP, the informants share that it is easy to master ESP materials when it is practiced as a habit. In relation to the English instruction, they share that ESP instruction is ideally taught using more practices in terms of tasks instead of theoretical masteries. Some of them also share that ESP is easier mastered if the learners have mastered general English (GE) successfully because GE becomes the ESP foundation and communication media.

Mastering ESP effectively and efficiently guides the learners to be successful ESP learners. The informants share that the ESP learners should enhance their learning not only intensively but also extensively (being an autonomous learners). The learning sources include Internet, technical books, videos, SOP, and manual. In struggling to be a successful learner, it is likely to find a number of problems thus the learners need to consult and share with the English teacher, senior students, or become such an English community member. More detail, the characteristics of successful ESP learners are described based on the learners and learning variables.

B. Learners variables

The learner variables are indicators hold by the learners as the modal or basic for ESP learning. The first discussed variable is communication ability. The informants share some strategies on how to develop communication ability, i.e. joining an English community and making English as a habit (daily communication language). Joining an English community is regarded as a proper technique in consideration that the classroom English learning is not enough for practicing English. Furthermore, practicing English as a habit is considered facilitating learners to master ESP successfully due to in the learners' daily activities they

find a lot of English learning references. In relation to practicing English as a habit, doing whatever the learners think is fun for English such as chatting with foreign colleagues might develop written communication ability as well.

The second component built learner variable is grammar. Even though in this post-modern era communicative approach is more widely applied, grammar is an inseparable necessary factor developing learners' variable. Basically the informants share two kinds of technique to develop grammar mastery, i.e. integrated-inductive and separated-deductive way. An integrated-inductive way means the learners identifying the grammar formula after comprehending the context while a separated-deductive way means the learners comprehending the formula without a context.

Learning and teaching process is considered to be ideal when there is an interaction between the teacher and the students. In other words, students' involvement contributes the success of learning and teaching activity. In fact, the students' involvement does not remain the same among students. Some are very active, active enough, and passive. In relation to the students' involvement, the informants share that responding the teachers' questions, doing the classroom assignment, and sharing problems with the teachers are seen as the effective way to get involved actively in the English instruction.

To be successful ESP learners, students are required to have awareness about the need of learning. The informants share that there is a close relationship between want and need; the awareness to 'want' to practice English with the awareness the 'need' of English. Since the goal of ESP is not only beneficial for the learners learning achievement but also their career, ESP learners should enjoy the process of learning that will be maximally mastered step by step instead of achieving the objective instantly. The process of learning in this case means practicing ESP as if the simulations of practicing English in the real work field.

Learners have various preferred learning strategies to facilitate their learning process. In ESP context, doing extensive strategies are more applicable since the area varies differently. The extensive strategies allow the learners to enjoy fun activities such as watching movies, watching video, reading English references, visiting work places, and sharing with seniors. The activities are intended to get the description of the future career.

Besides mastering the ESP materials, the learners believe they can develop their characters through ESP instruction. In practicing a work group assignment, cooperative, responsible, and respect others are built. Autonomous and independent values shaped because they are required to find the extensive ESP materials to share in the classroom. Since the ESP teachers observe the learners' classroom involvement individually, they are motivated to

compete to get as high mark as possible. In relation to personality, being a polite person is built through English communication in how practice polite expressions and use in the proper context. It is also closely related with how learners respect cultures among countries since communication using English might involve people from any country. Respecting cultures means acknowledging that all cultures exist and not to be opposed each other to show the best one.

C. Learning variables

The third finding falls upon the learning variables discussion. The components built learning variables are the indicators determining ESP learners' language mastery which consist of vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and error correcting.

Vocabulary is an element in learning a language which becomes the foundation to create larger form such as phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph, and discourse. Concerning to learners' ESP vocabulary mastery, the informants have the views that it can be done through identifying them contextually and drilling memorized lists of vocabulary. In process of identifying the vocabulary concept, it is normally found that the learners find difficulties since the technical terms are sometimes different with general meaning. To solve this problem, it is recommended to check the technical dictionary. In order to master the technical vocabularies successfully, the learners are required to hold reading ESP materials as a habit that the vocabularies exist in the learners' mind more easily.

In producing a language, especially in a spoken cycle, pronunciation becomes an essential indicator of successful learning. Mispronouncing might cause misunderstanding so the communication does not run smoothly. To master it, the informants believe that the effective way is integrating drilling correct pronunciation integrated with speaking or reading aloud. Repeating teachers' model or electronic media pronunciations are likely to be the other techniques considering that both models indicate the correct pronunciation. The digital media could be in the form of a digital dictionary, on line dictionary, songs, video, or even movie.

In a language skill cycle, listening places the first phase as a receptive skill in the spoken cycle. The data reveal that informants consider the effective media to facilitate listening skill development are songs, videos, and movies. To make the media relevant to ESP materials, the informants believe that teachers' creativity to select and adapt media into learning materials plays a big role that the learners find it easy to develop their listening skill.

Based on the chronological language skills development, speaking skill might be furthermore developed after mastering listening skill. As the productive skill of spoken cycle, developing speaking skill requires a number of rules; accuracy and fluency. The accuracy is effectively developed by mastering the grammar and language functions expressions. Meanwhile, the fluency is reached through regular, active, and a lot of speaking practices. The weekly learners presentations happen in the classroom are thought to be effective practice that might develop learners' confidence at the same time.

Reading for some learners becomes a skill which needs special treatments to develop especially an ESP context. In this study, the informants believe that reading skill is effectively developed by reading technical reading sources either an article, journal, SOP, manual, or encyclopedia intensively and more extensively. For reading for getting the main idea, the learners practice skimming and for getting a particular concept, the learners practice scanning. Those two reading sub-skills are considered to be the most frequently needed ability in order to read successfully.

The last phase of language skills is writing. Grenville (2001) proposes six steps of working on writing. They include getting ideas, selecting ideas, outlining ideas into the best order, drafting beginning ideas to the end, revising the draft, and editing the grammar, spelling, and paragraph. In relation to ESP context, developing writing skill seems difficult because it needs micro writing skills such as spelling, punctuation, coherence, and cohesion. Practice a lot is still seen as the effective way. The informants believe that developing writing skill successfully is not merely through formal context that is intensive instruction but also extensive practice such as written chatting with foreigners using social media.

In a learning process, making mistakes is considered as a normal process. Therefore, correcting a mistake is important to keep the proper language in the right position. Basically there are two ways to correct a mistake. The first is right away correcting. It is intended to remark that a mistake exists and the correction fixes it. By doing so, the learners can identify the error and the correction at the same way. The second is delayed correcting. It is mostly experienced by fast learners who have known the correction without correcting the error immediately. The weakness of a delayed correcting is the learners might forget the correct cases.

V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, successful ESP learners are characterized by three points. The first, ESP learners develop proper character values through the ESP instruction. Regarding that ESP is objectively designed to be able to communicate in a technical professional context, learners should keep good characters that the learners will have good personality workers at the future. Secondly, successful ESP learners are able to maximize learner variable that is a number of indicators which already attached to every learner before the learners experience a learning program. The third, successful ESP learners are able to develop learning variable that is a number of indicators to be mastered by a learner in a learning program intensively and extensively.

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