**The Non English Major Students’ Perception on ESP Course**

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Abstract: This study is intended to find out the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners’ perception of ESP course from three different departments majoring in accounting, banking, and management at the State Islamic University of Malang. The non-English major learners were purposively selected as the participants of the study. The students were interviewed in line with how they perceive ESP courses while a questionnaire consisting of some items related to ESP learners’ needs were also used to see their needs. Findings indicated that in term of attitude toward the ESP course, most of the students claimed to agree with the use of first language in particular situations as a kind of pedagogic device in order to teach different concepts, and content of the text. Regarding the English needs for English indicated that the course content was tailor made to suit their needs for academic learning experience such as to read textbooks and resource books and to participate in class discussion.

**Keywords:** ESP, Perception, Needs.

Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is not merely term for defining the teaching of English for any specification. It is rather defined as the teaching of English for professional and vocational purposes for non-English native speakers. Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters (1987) determined the meaning of ESP as a language teaching approach where all decisions as to content and method are based on the learners’ reasons for learning. In more detail, Strevens (1998) described ESP as a specific case of general category of special purpose language teaching. Then he revealed that the definition of ESP is required to differentiate between four absolute and two variable characteristics. The four absolute characteristics of ESP consist of English language teaching are; (1) design to meet specific needs of the learners; (2) related to content (i.e. in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations, and activities; (3) centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc. and analysis of the discourse; and (4) differentiated to General English. While the two variable characteristics of ESP are restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g. reading only) and it is not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

Dudley-Evans (1998) amended Strevens’ definition of ESP significantly by eliminating the absolute characteristics of ESP and developing several characteristics on variable one. The definition is as follow: Absolute characteristics: ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learner, ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves, ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register) skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities; Variable characteristics: ESP may be related to or designed for specific discipline, ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English, ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. However, ESP can be used for learners at a secondary school level, ESP is generally intended for intermediate or advanced students since most ESP courses take up some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998).

ESP program has been established both at university level and occupational setting. This is proposed to meet specific instructional objectives such as to be able to read and understand English text in the students’ field of study, write laboratory activities reports, and make presentation. A number of factors contribute to the establishment and popularity of ESP. The progression of technology and commerce enquire practitioners to master specific language skills (Block and Cameron, 2002).

ESP has been speeding up due to a shift of paradigm in educational psychology to learners and their attitude to learning. Learners were seen to have different needs and interests, which would have an important influence on their motivation to learn and therefore on their effectiveness of their learning (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The effect is to create a new mass of people wanting to learn English not for the pleasure or prestige of knowing the language, but because English is the key to the international currencies of technology and commerce. A critical question was aroused why it was necessary to learn English or any other languages.

ESP approach needs a well-designed research curriculum and pedagogy for its students. ESP should not be taught in a vacuum, but should prepare students for the content and tasks to which they will be exposed. The teachers should rise their energies to provide the students what is most appropriate for them (Johns, 1995). Teaching English at the tertiary level for non-English Department is still focused on the need for the capability of reading relevant text books. The teaching of English is focused on the reading skill specialized in relevant text books which will strengthen the mastery of basic vocabulary and grammar because mastering reading skill is determined mostly by those two elements. However, this shift gives other study skills such as note taking, group discussion, presentation and academic writing.

It should be understood as an approach to teach or what Dudley-Evans describes as an ‘attitude of mind’. This is a similar hypothesis to that proposed by Hutchinson & Waters (1987) who stated that ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning. The meaning of ‘special’ in ESP approves the rule of ESP as an approach to language teaching where content and method are applied based on the learner’s need in learning. It means, a specialized aim refers to the purpose for which learners learn a language, not the nature of the language they learn (Mackay & Mountford, 1978). Therefore, as an approach, ESP has characteristically functioned to help language learners manage with the features of language or to develop the competencies needed to function in a discipline, profession, or workplace for which the learners want to master English. In the context of teaching English in Universitas Islam Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, especially for non-English department students, ESP approach has been commonly applied. This is in accordance with the Government Policy on Education that accentuates the goal of teaching English at tertiary school level (non-English department students) is to improve their ability to use English for academic and professional purposes, especially for reading their textbooks in their academic work. This infers that in English language instruction, reading skill has been given the greatest prominence for helping students to learn effectively in their field of study. It is in line with Hutchinson & Waters’ statement that the specific purpose most common within the participant universities is the reading of specialist literature in English, and the focus is mostly on general course content to cover common problems, such as reading strategies, rather than specific discourses, according to the student subject specialism. For this purpose, then they explain that as the consequence, there is a agreement within the teaching and learning process to focus on the teaching of reading strategies with the use of authentic materials and the use of the native language in spoken classroom discourse, while the teaching of grammar is based on the minimum necessary for understanding academic texts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Based on this approach, reading is the most emphasized skill in the English instruction, other language skills like speaking, listening, and writing will also take place with the components of language incorporated in it.

The objective of ESP course is to equip the learners with a certain English proficiency level for a situation in which the language is going to be used, i.e., target needs (Sujana, 2005), then, especially for non-English department students of this university, being able to communicate English as well as use it for learning their subjects excellently would be measured as their core requirements of learning English. In this context, English is not merely a subject matter to be learned, as it is commonly placed as one of compulsory subjects in the curriculum, but also as a mean for the students learning in their fields of study. A matter of fact of ESP is that combining subject matters and English language in the instruction where the students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes right away in their study, whether it be economics, education, accounting, business management, sciences, or Islamic studies. In turn, their abilities in their subject-matter fields are of a great help to English achievement. Therefore it is clear that the foundation of ESP is the simple question of what the students learn English for, where the answer to the question relates to the learners that is their needs, the language required that is the language skills they need to master and how well, and the learning context that refers to the genres they need to master either for comprehension or production purposes (Dudley-Evans, 2001). Therefore, the study is done to answer the questions (1) what are the non English major students’ perception toward the ESP course? and (2) what are the non EFL students’ perception toward the need of ESP course?

METHOD

In order to investigate the students’ perception of the ESP courses delivered in the selected academic units at the State Islamic University, Malang, a survey method was used. The research population comprised 32 students of the Faculty of Science and Technology, the Faculty of Economy and Faculty of Pshychology. A questionnaire which was distributed to students comprised twelve statements and three open ended questions.

**Design of the Study**

A case study was used to describe the situation of teaching/learning of English for Specific Purposes at the State Islamic higher education.

**Population**

The studied population was composed of the non English students of the State Islamic University, Malang. A class of students was picked out randomly (all the classes of the institution were numbered, a simple random picking out was done and a class was selected and included in the study).

 **Data Collection**

The data were collected using a self administered and anonymous questionnaire in which the writer was initially based on the personal criteria of age, sex as well as the socio-demographic characteristics to draw a distinction between learners. The specialty before undertaking the higher education is also used as a parameter in the questionnaire in order to determine the importance of English language. We have also collected information about the numberof hours of English language learning, the time table and their influence on the learning of English, and the students‟point of view towards the teaching aids

**RESULTS**

**General Characteristics**

The studied population included 32 second year non English students at the State Islamic University, Malang Indonesia. These students were aged between 20 and 25 years. The average age of this population was 20 years. The percentage of males slightly exceeded that of females in the studied population. In fact, 44,6% of this population were males whereas 55,4% were females. These students were in their bachelor's degree with different majors. The students who had the bachelor's degree in the specialty of mathematics represented 52,2% of the population, while the students who had a bachelor's degree in the specialty of science represented 31,5% of it. The students who had a bachelor's degree in the specialty of economics and management represented only 16,1% of the whole population.

**Importance of English for Specific Purposes**

The analysis of the data collected in the survey shows generally positive attitude of the students. Their responses to particular questions also reflect positive evaluation of the course. The answers showed that 87,5% of the students of the State Islamic University, Malang considered English for Specific Purposes as an important subject. 23 or 72% respondents claimed to agree with the use of first language in particular situations as a kind of pedagogic device in order to teach different concepts, and content of the text. Twenty two (69%) students out of 32 found the course contents have been suitable with their needs. Students were also asked to grade the opportunity that the course provided for improvement of their language skills in the ESP course. The respondents indicated different manner to respond the needed improvement skill. The opportunities provided for the improvement of listening skills was claimed by 4.06% respondents, speaking was claimed by 4.37% respondents, reading was chosen by 4.8% respondents, and writing was claimed by 34.3% respondents. This finding implied that reading was the main priority that must be developed to meet the need of the ESP students, The number of hours of the English learning was very sufficient for 20,7% of the students, while students who considered this number as sufficient were 55,4% of the population 23,9% of them affirmed that the number of hours of the learning of English was not sufficient. More than half of these students weren‟t satisfied with the English for Specific Purposes time table. In fact, 59,4% among them mentioned that the schedules of learning English were not suitable.

Nevertheless they see that the ESP course contents as adapted and adaptable to their future professional life. The rate of motivation (96,9%) of the students of the Preparatory Institute for Engineering Studies of Monastir for the learning of English for Specific Purposes showed that almost all students were motivated to study this subject. Yet, it is important to notice that a big majority of these students see English teaching at university as less motivating than that of the secondary school. In fact, 71,9% of these students said that the teaching of English at university was not motivating. Concerning teaching aids, 87,5% of these students were in favor of the use of audio-visual aids during the English courses and only 12,5% of them partially agreed with the usage of this teaching aid.

**CONCLUSION**

The analysis of the situation of teaching/learning of English for Specific Purposes in Tunisia is of paramount importance and this is for different reasons. On the one hand, there was scarce work devoted to the study of this situation in our country. In addition, the number of students and the non literary institutions has been in increase for a number of years and this increase requires an exploration of the situation of teaching/learning of this specialty. Scrutiny of the results shows that the majority of learners were motivated for the learning of English for Specific Purposes. Yet, these learners regarded the teaching of English for Specific Purposes in the higher education as not motivating. A great percentage of learners preferred the use of audiovisuals in the English courses. It would be thus interesting to think of improving the situation in this field in Tunisia. This improvement could be carried out by introducing the use of audiovisuals as well as offering trainings to the teachers of English for Specific Purpos

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