

ESP Teacher's and Students' Perceptions on Teaching Speaking for a Tourism Program

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Abstract

This study was focused on English for Specific Purposes to look into the teacher's and students' perceptions about teaching speaking for a Tourism Program. Eight males and females Tourism students and their English teacher in a private Vocational Secondary School in Surakarta were purposively selected as the participants of this study. They were invited to take part in a semi-structured interview. The findings showed that English for Tourism emphasizes more on building students' speaking skills. All participants share their positive perceptions on teaching speaking for the Tourism Program. The students perceive that speaking is crucial for them since it strongly affects their future career. Moreover, there are several difficulties faced by the students during the learning process including grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and content. There are also some challenges such as lacking confidence, low motivation, and limited learning materials. However, both teacher and students are actively involved in overcoming those problems. This study shed light on the importance of teacher-students collaboration. Therefore, it is suggested that they should work collaboratively to improve the quality of ESP programs.

Keywords: ESP, English for Tourism, Teaching Speaking

A. Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the largest components of global economy. It grows rapidly as the result of global needs. The accelerated growth of the tourism industry affects the use of English as an International Language. The employees of tourism companies

have to master English well since they must communicate efficiently and effectively with foreign customers. As reported by Prachanant (2012), Pinelopi (2015), and Li (2016) in their studies about language use in the tourism industry, speaking receives more attention in exploring students' language skills. It means that speaking skill is very crucial for Tourism students. Those phenomena lead to the belief that teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is very important in order to develop students' English skills for Tourism purposes.

The term ESP is defined as "goal oriented language learning" (Robinson, 1991). Hutchinson & Waters (1992) define ESP as an approach to language learning which is based on the learners' needs. It means that the contents and the methods of ESP teaching are based on the needs of the students. It is in line with Xhaferi (2010) who states that ESP courses deal mostly with "language in context" rather than "language usage" (grammar rules or ways of structuring the language). The skills taught and developed in the classroom are those the learners exactly need. It can be concluded that ESP is an approach to language learning which is designed to meet the specific needs of the learners in certain disciplines or professions.

In any case, the implementation of teaching ESP in Vocational Secondary Schools (VSS) is not easy. Moreover, for non-English speaking countries like Indonesia, it becomes more challenging. Many students still lack competence to communicate effectively using English. It can be understood because English is only used in the school environment. Furthermore, the materials or textbooks used in all programs are the same. There are no specifications regarding the materials and skills that should be taught. The reason why teachers use the same materials or textbooks in different course programs is to prepare students pass the national examination. Ramazani (2013) particularly points out that teacher's perception is significantly influenced by the demand of examinations. Thus, the way teachers use English textbooks in teaching vocational students also changes.

However, the materials should be in line with the course goals. It should function as a link between previous knowledge and the new information they will learn. As stated by Hutchinson & Waters (1992), choosing ESP materials determine the running of the course and underline the content of the lesson. The teachers should be aware of whether or not the materials are suitable or not for a particular discipline. The above statement implies that teachers' perceptions are crucial for the development and success of educational programs.

Theoretically, perception refers to the process of recognizing and understanding events, objects, and stimuli through the use of sense such as sight, hearing, and touch (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Perception cannot be separated from action because perception is filtered by action (Borghi, 2005). Perception is linked to action in some obvious ways. The connection between them is intimate enough. Perception is a key mediator of attitude-behavior consistency (Bodenhausen & Hugenberg, 2009)

The explanation above shows that perception plays significant roles in the teaching-learning process. For the teacher, it guides teachers to adopt, adapt, or develop their teaching

materials or teaching strategies for dealing with their daily language teaching challenges. As stated by Barcelos (2003), language teachers' perception influences how the teachers teach in the classroom. Borg (2003) states that what teachers do reflects their beliefs and it can be in the form of classroom practices such as the methods, procedures, materials, interactions, and instructions. Meanwhile, for the students, it can shape students' learning attitudes, learning motivations, and learning achievements. As cited by Richards & Lockhart (2007), students' perceptions can affect their motivations, their attitudes about language learning including their expectations and their learning strategies.

Furthermore, the study of perception and cognition has become mushrooming issue in English Foreign Language (EFL) research in recent years as reported by Borg, (2003), Pham & Malvetti (2012), Dja'far, Cahyono, & Bashtomi (2016), Othman & Kiely (2016), and Mollaei, Taghinezhad, & Sadighi (2017). Then, the exploration of how ESP teachers become language teachers, what perception they have as English teachers, how they implement it in the teaching practices, and what factors affect their perception are common issues revealed.

Considering these phenomena, investigating teacher's and students' perceptions on teaching ESP, especially speaking skills in VSS is significant. It could be an initial step to identify teachers' and students' needs in order to develop and improve the quality of education programs. Thus, this study aims to investigate and to reach a more comprehensive account of teacher's and students' perceptions. This investigation was carried out at a private VSS in Surakarta that provides a Tourism program.

B. Literature Review

1. Perceptions

Teaching is a long process of educational activities which deals with many different activities that begin with choosing learning activities, preparing students for new learning, presenting learning activities, asking questions, conducting drills, checking students understanding, providing students' learning, giving feedbacks, etc.. To understand how teachers deal with these teaching activities, it is crucial to investigate teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and thinking processes which accord to classroom practices (Richards & Lockhart, 2007).

Nanay (2013) says that perception sometimes is about action. Woods (1996) as cited by Golombek (2009) states that teacher's perception is linked to belief, attitude, and knowledge. Knowledge refers to a subset of facts in a broad sense. Belief refers to a conception (narrower than knowledge) believed by people that influences attitude (Skott, 2015). Attitude refers to a person's action or behavior that reflects his/her beliefs (Schraw & Olafson, 2015). In view of the existing literatures, it can be inferred that perception refers to individual knowledge, belief, and attitude about a particular matter.

Regarding the explanation above, Farrell & Bennis (2013) proved that exploring language teachers' perception is significant to clarify how the teachers implement their

perception in the classroom practices. They found that experienced teachers tend to practice what they stated. The decision teachers made mostly based on their perception on students' needs. It is in line with Johnson (1994) cited by Inceçay (2011) who states that belief influences both perception and judgment which affect what teachers say and do in the classroom.

This is cleared by Mehr, Kazemi, & Omidvari (2015) who conducted a study about the effect of teachers' beliefs in their instructional practices. The result of the study showed that teachers' knowledge and belief influence the teachers' teaching practices in the classroom. They revealed that there is positive correlation between teachers' belief about the necessity of reading strategy in teaching practices and their actual employment of classroom practices. It is also congruent with a study carried by Inayati & Emaliana (2017). The study revealed that the teachers' pedagogical beliefs play important role in utilizing Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the learning processes. The results of the study confirmed that the teacher-students' beliefs about learning English are reflected in the classroom practices.

2. English For Spesific Purposes

According to Belcher (2009) cited by Ahmed (2014), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) refers to English language teaching which is developed to meet the learners' needs of English in a particular field. Richards (2001) states that ESP is an approach to language teaching that is designed to make language courses more relevant to the learners' needs. It is in line with Fiorito (2005) who explains that ESP aims to develop students' language skills in professional communication. ESP focuses on teaching language in context rather than teaching grammar and language structure. Then, English is taught as a subject that is integrated to the students' subject area.

A similar explanation is delivered by Basturkment (2010). He explains that ESP functions to help language learners cope with the features of a particular language or to develop the competencies needed to work within a discipline, profession, or workplace. Teaching ESP promotes the enhancement of language skills and acquisition of specific information. Moreover, he adds that ESP is oriented not only around the sentence structures and word combinations, but also around the terms and the word choices in different kinds of text (Kitkauskienė, 2006).

3. English For Tourism

The necessity of English in tourism industry is highly important. The employees who work in the tourism companies need to have good English skills to be used in their workplace. English is used extensively for interpersonal communication purposes because in the tourism/travel company, the employees have a variety of tasks such as handling telephone, offering destination guide, making on-line ticketing, making on-line hotel booking, arranging for car rentals, etc. (Al-khatib, 2005)

Subsequently, Liu, Wu, & Huang (2013) emphasizes that Hospitality and Tourism students are more attracted to do practical activities rather than learn theories. Thus, the teacher needs to instruct their students by considering the students' learning styles in order to make them interested in learning certain programs. Furthermore, to keep up students' interest in learning English, the teacher needs to adopt some strategies in teaching English for Tourism students such as: updating teaching concept and method; defining teaching objectives; change teacher-centered to student-centered; combining curriculum provision and textbook selection with local attraction and culture; and enhancing school-enterprise cooperation (Qin, 2013).

In addition, determining and selecting the appropriate materials should be emphasized on teaching ESP for Tourism students. ESP teacher needs to modify and adds the current teaching materials to make it more appropriate to the students' needs (Baghban & Ambigapathy, 2011). Masoumpanah & Tahririan (2013) maintained that the ESP teachers need to add supplementary materials to support the main textbook because it is difficult to find a textbook that covers all materials respect to the students' needs. Similarly, Leong & Li (2011) exposed that providing appropriate teaching materials are extremely easy, since the relevant English textbooks for the Tourism Program are limited. Regarding these facts, Esteban & Martínez (2014) pointed out that the use of technology such as the internet in teaching ESP promotes teaching materials development.

4. Teaching Speaking for Tourism Program

According Masoumpanah & Tahririan (2013), the students of the Tourism and Hotel Management have to fluent in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, speaking skills are highly needed in tourism industry because in the workplace, the students will do communication activities such as giving directions, requesting and giving tourist information, giving information about hotel facilities, meal times, etc. Moreover, Prachanant (2012) in his research about language use in the tourism industry found that speaking skills perceives more attention in cultivating students' language skills.

In accordance with teaching speaking, Brown (2000) states that teaching speaking refers to teaching accuracy and fluency. Teaching accuracy deals with teaching language usage or language oriented teaching. Teaching fluency deals with teaching language use or message oriented teaching. Thornbury (2005) says that teaching speaking is an interactive process requiring the ability to co-operate in the management of speaking turns.

Thus, to foster students' speaking skills for tourism purposes, the ESP teacher should provide a variety of learning activities such as group discussions, role plays, etc. (Zahedpisheh, Abu, & Saffari, 2017). It is congruent with Thornbury (2005) who explains that autonomy tasks allow the students to have more practices so those can maximize their speaking opportunities. It can be done through presentations, discussions, and role plays. It is also confirmed by Harmer (2007) who states that speaking activities such as acting from scripts, discussions, and presentations can promote students' speaking skills.

C. Research Methodology

The method used in this research is case study that concerned with the exploration of ESP teacher's and students' perceptions on teaching speaking for Tourism program. The study is based on the view of Yin (2009) who proposes that case study investigates people's languages, behaviors, artifacts and interpersonal relationships. The participants of this study were eight males and females Tourism students and their English teacher in a private Vocational Secondary School (VSS) in Surakarta. They were chosen based on the purpose of the study. The purpose of selecting the case was to dig deeper tools for understanding of a phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

The research data were collected from a teacher and eight students through the use of semi-structured interview. The data obtained from the interview were the interviewees' statements in response to the questions. The interview protocol was developed based on Patton (1991). It covers questions about participants' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted qualitatively. Qualitative analysis involves three stages of organizing and familiarizing, coding and reducing, and interpreting and representing. All qualitative analysis involves attempts to comprehend the phenomenon under study, synthesizes information and explains relationships, theorizes how and why the relationships appear as they do, and reconnects the new knowledge with what is already known (Ary, Jacobs, Lucy, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010).

D. Findings

This study parsed several findings which elaborated more about teacher's and students' perceptions about teaching speaking for vocational students especially in a Tourism Program. They were divided into 3 categories of perceptions adopted from Woods (1996) cited by Golombek (2009) who states that perception is linked to knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. Further, each major categories explored spesific findings.

1. Knowledge

Teaching English for Tourism Programs

The teacher's knowledge about teaching English for VSS is identified in her statements during the interview. The teacher explains that teaching English for vocational students is teaching language skills for their future career rather than teaching grammar and language structure. VSS students are required to have professional communication skills. There is a difference between teaching English at Vocational Secondary School (VSS) and Senior Secondary Schools (SSS). The difference is in the teaching materials. In VSS, the materials are designed for Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) whereas in SSS, the materials are designed for Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). She got that information based on training of Technical Guide of Curriculum 2013 Revision which held by government in 2016.

On the other hand, the students' knowledge about teaching English for vocational students is almost similar. Most of them describe English language learning as a subject

that can help them prepare themselves to be ready to work in certain fields such as the tourism industry. They state that learning English is very valuable for them because during the learning process they can cultivate their English skills as tour guides by practicing public speaking.

In relation with the sources of knowledge, the students know the information about teaching English for vocational students especially for Tourism Program from various sources such as their teacher, books, and the internet but they mostly state that the information is delivered by the teacher. However, there are two students who explain differently, S3 states that she got the information based on her own experiences, and S8 says that he got it based on his friends' and his parents' explanation.

2. Belief

English Skills for Tourism Programs

All the participants including the teacher and the students believe that speaking skills have big implications in students' future career. However, they say that the other skills such as listening, reading, and writing are still needed. The teacher says, *"Because the students are trained to be ready to work so, English Language Teaching (ELT) tends to focus on speaking skills for transactional purposes"*. Next, S2 states, *"All skills are important, but I think speaking is the most important one"*. Similarly, S6 adds that the most needed skill is speaking because it has a close relationship with guiding skills. The other skills are also important for other aspects of tourism such as hospitality, ticketing, etc.

The Objectives of Teaching Speaking

The interview results indicated that the objective of teaching speaking for Tourism students is to build guiding skills. The teacher explains that teaching speaking is teaching how to express something, e.g. expressing offering, expressing invitation, expressing compliment, etc. By learning speaking, the students can apply what they have learnt for their future career, e.g. students are able to explain tourist sites when they guide tourists, and students are able to introduce themselves in the interview session of pre-service guides (on the job training). The teacher says, *"At least, as guides in tourism companies, they know how to give good guiding, how to give directions, how to speak in a public"*.

Divergent opinions are mentioned by the students. In the students' viewpoint, the objectives of teaching speaking are that: the students are able to speak fluently, either using British or an American accents (S1 and S3); the students are able to deliver information clearly and correctly (S2 and S7); the students are able to speak confidently (S4); the students are able to speak fluently and confidently in a public (S5, S6, and S8). There were only three students (S5, S6, and S8) who have the same conception as their teacher with regard to the objective of teaching speaking. The objective is to build their skills in relation with tourism purposes (guiding skills).

Methods for Teaching Speaking

The teacher states that typically the methods for teaching speaking can vary. Usually, the methods depend on the characteristic of the class. Sometimes she changes the method if it does not work well in the class. Eventhough the methods are varied, lecturing is believed to be more effective than other methods. This aims at helping the students understand what they are going to learn. This method is done before doing other activities that involve students actively in learning activities such as discussions and role plays.

In relation with teaching methods, the students mention their own conception in choosing the appropriate methods in speaking class. Most of them prefer to do discussions and presentations in the speaking class, for instance: student 3 (S3) believes that presentations and discussions foster her speaking skills. Some of the students preferred to choose lecturing and modelling since those were useful to provide the students with necessary information and examples related to the materials. One of the students states her view: *“First, I learn the examples given by mam N***. Second, I apply it in the discussion”*.

1. Attitude

Difficulties and Challenges in Teaching Speaking

The teacher says that there are some difficulties and challenges in teaching speaking which are faced by the students and the teacher. Many students face difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. In addition, parts of them have lack of confidence and low motivation. Therefore, the teacher attempts to overcome the students' difficulties by providing the appropriate solutions. In this case, to increase students' confidence, the teacher gives the students tips to decrease their nervous. The teacher said, *“To avoid nervous, don't gaze into your fiends' eyes but look at the top of your friends' head.”*. Then, to improve the students' understanding about grammar, the teacher provides the students with the correct sentence constructions. The teacher said, *“If there is a question ‘Where are you going?’, i asked the students to answer ‘I am going to the Grand Mall’ instead of ‘Grand Mall’*.

In line with the teacher's explanation, many students find difficulties in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, content, and confidence. However, pronunciation and grammar are the most common difficulties mentioned by the students. S2 says *“The part of grammar and pronunciation”*. S4, S5, S6, and S8 face similar difficulties in how to pronounce the words appropriately and how to use grammar correctly. In order to cope with these situations, many students prefer to ask to their teacher about the difficulties then the teacher gives them suggestions and explanations. S6 explains, *“If we find difficulties, the teacher usually gives us tips how to memorize the material. If we cannot pronounce the words, the teacher shows us how to pronounce the words.”*

In another case, the teacher and the students have similar opinions about the limited materials in the textbook and these become a challenge in the learning process. Therefore, to cope with the challenge, the teacher selects and adopts the teaching materials form the internet. The teacher affirms that the internet is used to find additional materials. They are taken from the official website of Surakarta City that contains all about Surakarta including

histories, tourist sites, traditional foods, etc. In the same line, the students say that they usually find the learning materials from the internet sources such as Google, Youtube, Instagram, and Wet pad as stated by S3, "*Sometimes, I use internet, sometimes I also read Wet pad because there are English contents so our English skill is trained*". S1 adds that she usually finds the materials from online applications such as Instagram and Youtube.

E. Discussions

The current study concerns with the investigation of teacher's and students' perceptions about teaching speaking for a Tourism Program in the ESP framework. The revealed findings affirmed that teaching English for vocational students (Tourism Program) is very important in order to prepare student who have English skills especially for tourism purposes. It is in line with Pinelopi (2015) who revealed that English for Tourism mainly emphasizes on building communication skills through improving students' speaking skills. The students are required to be competent in using English in their future work. The similar explanation is delivered by Basturkment (2010). He explains that English for Tourism students functions to help language learners cope with the features of particular language in a discipline, profession, or workplace.

Subsequently, ESP for Tourism Program highlighted more in building students' speaking skills because the skills have big implication to their future career. However, other skills such listening, reading, and writing are still needed. The similar findings are revealed by Prachanant (2012) in his research about language use in the tourism industry. He found that speaking perceives more attention in cultivating students' speaking skills, followed by listening, writing, and reading continuously. This is also cleared by Li (2016) who found that oral ability should be explored first in order to develop excellent talent of Tourism students. It indicates that speaking becomes the most crucial ability of all.

In relation with teaching methods, this study found that applying discussions and presentations in the speaking class seem effective since these methods can stimulate students to speak actively. The similar result was exposed by Pham & Malvetti (2012) in a study about teacher' perceptions about teaching English for the ESP Program. They found that presentations/group works and role plays are the activities that mostly support students' productivity in speaking. It is also supported by Thornbury (2005) who explains that presentations and discussions allow students to have more practices so these can maximize their speaking opportunities. However, lecturing and modelling are still needed in the learning process because providing necessary information is absolutely essential for the success of doing tasks (Harmer, 1998).

In accordance with the sources of teaching materials, the internet perceives high attention as the valuable source for enriching the limited materials provided in the textbook. It is similar with previous study carried by Pham & Malvetti (2012). They revealed that online sources are very useful to help the teacher found information of the subject matter. Furthermore, Esteban & Martínez (2014), maintained that finding information from the internet is a good way to build students' knowledge about their course program.

The results of this study seem to indicate that the students and the teacher show positive attitudes toward teaching speaking. They are actively involved in overcoming the barriers appeared in the learning process, including the difficulties related to speaking components (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and content), the challenge related to students' anxiety (confidence and motivation), and the challenge related to learning materials (textbook).

F. Conclusion

Teaching English for vocational students is teaching language skills to prepare the students for their future career rather than teaching grammar and language structure. Then, regard to Tourism Program, VSS should provide appropriate English course which support the tourism purposes. Furthermore, a complete and clear curriculum design should be beneficial to achieve these purposes.

Subsequently, the findings of this study suggest that ESP teachers and students should work collaboratively to improve the quality of ESP programs. Moreover, the teacher's professional development should be addressed not only to the teachers' content knowledge and teaching methodology, but also to make them aware of the students' needs regarding their course program. Therefore, the goal of ESP teaching will be meaningful to the students.

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