REVITALISASI NILAI-NILAI ARKEOLOGI, SEJARAH, BAHASA, BUDAYA, DAN ALAM MELAYU MELALUI RISET MULTIDISIPLINER

PROSIDING Seminar Antarbangsa Arkeologi, Sejarah, Budaya, dan Bahasa di Alam Melayu Nusantara (ASBAM) ke-5 Makassar, 26-27 Juli 2016
SAMBUTAN DEKAN
FAKULTAS ILMU BUDAYA UNIVERSITAS HASANUDDIN

Pertama-tama marilah kita panjatkan puji syukur ke hadirat Allah SWT yang telah melimpahkan berbagai kenikmatan kepada kita sekalian. Salah satu nikmat yang sekarang kita rasakan adalah nikmat kesehatan sehingga kita dapat menyelenggarakan seminar internasional ini. Selanjutnya perkenankan saya menyampaikan penghargaan dan ucapan terima kasih kepada Ketua Panitia beserta seluruh jajaran kepanitiaan seminar internasional ASBAM V yang telah mempersiapkan terselenggaranya seminar ini. Hal ini sangat penting untuk saya sampaikan mengingat Fakultas Ilmu Budaya sedang bekerja keras untuk menggapai pengakuan publik sebagai fakultas yang berkualitas dalam melaksanakan sistem manajemen mutu untuk mendukung Universitas Hasanuddin menuju world class university (WCU).


Kepada semua pembicara baik yang berasal dari luar maupun dari dalam negeri kami ucapkan terima kasih atas partisipasinya, semoga memberikan pencerahan bagi kita khususnya yang selalu telibat dalam penelitian, pembelajaran dan aplikasi bidang kebudayaan dan bahasa di kawasan Asia Tenggara.

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REVITALISASI NILAI-NILAI ARKEOLOGI, SEJARAH, BAHASA, BUDAYA, DAN ALAM MELAYU MELALUI RISET MULTIDISIPLINER
VOLUME 1

PROSIDING
Seminar Antarbangsa Arkeologi, Sejarah, Budaya, dan Bahasa di Alam Melayu Nusantara (ASBAM) ke-5
Makassar, 26-27 Juli 2016

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REVITALISASI NILAI-NILAI ARKEOLOGI, SEJARAH, BAHASA, BUDAYA, DAN ALAM MELAYU MELALUI RISET MULTIDISIPLINER
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Makassar, 26-27 Juli 2016

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Hak Cipta Dilindungi Undang-Undang

Penyunting : Akin Duli dkk
Desain Sampul : Masagena @rt
Tata Letak : Masagena @rt
Penerbit : Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Hasanuddin
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Tamalanrea, Makassar, Indonesia 90245
Telp. 0411-587223, Fax. 0411-587223
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Cetakan : Pertama, 2016
xii + 448 hlm, 21 x 29,7 cm

ISBN: 978-602-99268-6-6 (jilid 1)

Ilustrasi sampul berasal dari:
https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aksara_Lontara
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THE USE OF ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION
(A CASE STUDY IN A CROSS CULTURE COMMUNICATION CLASS,
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, HASANUDDIN UNIVERSITY)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

One of the impacts of internationalisation is the increasing use of English. Since a couple of years ago, there has been an increasing tendency in countries where English has the status as a second or a foreign language to use English as an instructional language in different fields (Keuk & Tith, 2013, p. 163). In the Asian region, the emerging ASEAN community, which tends to consider English as a langue franca, encourages Asian countries to set up language policies that emphasize the use of English. For example, in Thailand, the government has issued a language policy that requires students in Thailand to increase their English skills so that they can be ready to be part of the ASEAN community (Kantavong, 2015, p. 84).

Furthermore, an increasing number of universities all around the world show an eagerness to make a way to become world class universities. These universities promote many international programs, including arranging student and staff exchanges, initiating summer school programs where students from all around the world meet each other and do activities together, and even opening international classes.

In the universities that promote international programs, English is highly likely to be used as the main language. In Africa, according to Keuk and Tith (2013, p. 163) English has been chosen by officials in charge of making language policy to be used in teaching activities in universities. Similarly, Ibrahim (cited in Keuk & Tith 2013, p. 163) reported that since 1990s English has been applied in the postgraduate studies in Indonesia, especially in the field of MBA. In addition to the important role of English in the instructional activities, according to Kirkpatrick (cited in Keuk & Tith 2013, p. 163) English gains a significant position in the process of assessment at the university level by particularly using IELTS and TOEFL tests.

Being a dominant language used in international programs, English can be regarded as an important language. The role it plays as the main language of instruction would determine students’ rate of success in the learning process. It is then important to find out the effect of the use of English as the instructional language on the level of students’ achievement, as well as lecturers’ and students’ attitude toward the language itself. The latter is particularly important as it determines students’ motivation, which is one of the keys for students to obtain a maximum result in a learning process. Therefore, this study is particularly intended to investigate students’ attitude toward the use of English as the language of instruction.

1.2 Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following research questions:

a. How is the students’ attitude in general towards the use of English as the language of instruction?

b. How is the students’ attitude towards the use of English in giving presentations, and in asking and answering questions?

c. What are the students’ opinions about the policy of using English as the language of instruction?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

a. describe the students’ attitude in general towards the use of English as the language of instruction;
b. describe the students' attitude towards the use of English in giving presentations, and in asking and answering questions; and

c. explain the students' opinions about the policy of using English as the language of instruction.

1.4 Significance of the Research

This study has a specific significance in the current context in which many universities try to be World Class Universities. In an international university, English is likely to become one of the languages mainly used in instructional activities. Therefore, it is important to predict what would happen if English is used as an instructional language. As the application of English as an instructional language might result in both positive and negative impacts, a careful consideration based on accurate information is needed. It is expected that this research can provide information about students' attitude and opinion about the use of English as the language of instruction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Some studies have investigated the use of English as the language of instruction. The findings include the opinion of students and lecturers about the phenomenon, and the effect of the English use on the process of teaching and learning.

First of all, according to Vinke (cited in Vinke, Snippe & Jochems 1998, pp. 384–385), there have been several studies on the teaching behaviour of International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) in US who are not native speakers of English. From these studies, it is particularly important to note the negative opinion about the ITAs. It was considered that ITAs were not as effective as American assistants, and this less effectiveness was particularly regarded to appear among ITAs whose limited English skills (Vinke cited in Vinke, Snippe & Jochems 1998, p. 385). This finding shows that linguistic skills do have an impact on the teaching performance.

Indeed, lecturers and students who are not native speakers of English will find difficulties when using English as the language of instruction. In a study on the use of English as the language of instruction at Wageningen University of Agricultural Sciences, it was found that although the lecturers were confident enough with their English ability, students had negative perception about the lecturers' English skills and assumed that the use of English would result in some bad consequences, such as reducing the level and the quality of interaction between students and lecturers (Zonneveld cited in Vinke, Snippe & Jochems 1998, p. 385). Furthermore, in a study investigating lecturers' opinion about the use of English in instructional activities in some Dutch higher educational institutions, many of the respondents reported that they had difficulties (Vinke, Snippe & Jochems 1998, pp. 387–388). For example, 65% of the lecturers found difficulties in determining appropriate words in expressing their thinking, and 61% felt more exhausting feeling when using English in their class (Vinke, Snippe & Jochems 1998, p.387). Difficulties can be also felt by students. For example, Kagwesage (cited in Kantavong 2015, p. 86) who tried to find out what Rwandan university students thought about the use of English as the only language of instruction found that, according to the students, their English skill was not sufficient enough to meet the academic requirement in the courses, and this became a constraint in their learning process. These evidences imply that it is important to measure the level of English proficiency among lecturers and students before making a decision to use English as the language of instruction.

The most important thing to note is the impact of English as a Medium of Instruction. A somewhat positive effect is reported in a study by Wong (cited in Kantavong 2015, p. 85). This author conducted a research at Hong Kong University to find out whether the use of English as the only instructional language in classes was effective, and it was found that the students became more confident as they used more English in classes. Similarly, in a study by Chang (cited in Kantavong 2015, p. 86) on some content courses using English at undergraduate level, it was found that, according to the students, the use of English as the language of instruction makes their English better.

However, it seems that there are more negative consequences. The students in Chang's study above, while feeling that their English skill increased, thought that their level of understanding on the
subject matter was not good (Chang cited in Kantavong 2015, p. 86). Another negative impact can be seen in the quality of teaching. In the study by Zonneveld (cited in Vinke, Snippe & Jochems 1998, p. 385), the students had expressed their concern that the use of English would result in some bad impacts. This was evident in the study by Vinke, Snippe and Jochems (1998, p. 392) who found that when using English in teaching, the lecturers became less redundant, slower in speaking, less expressive, less clear, and less accurate (Vinke, Snippe & Jochems 1998, p. 392) and these changes, according to the researchers, were likely to negatively affect the level of students' academic achievement (Vinke, Snippe & Jochems 1998, p. 392). These findings were quite similar to the findings obtained by the researchers on International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) in US. It was found that compared to their American counterparts, the ITAs tended not to repeat information and became less varied in giving explanation, were less capable in structuring their presentations, had problems in talking, and did not have frequent interaction with the students (Vinke cited in Vinke, Snippe & Jochems 1998, pp. 384-385). These evidences, on both students and lecturers, have a strong implication. Limitations occurring in the teachers' performance while using English in teaching would result in limited learning outcomes.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study involved eleven respondents. They were students taking the class of Cross-Culture Communication taught by the researcher in 2015. One of them was a sixth-semester student, while the others were students of the fourth semester. The respondents obtained good score for the subject (A, A-, B+, and B). Only one respondent did not inform the score he/she obtained. Most of the respondents said that they used Bahasa Indonesia at home. Some informed that they spoke a local language. The respondents have studied English for 7–12 years at schools, homes, English courses, and universities.

The data were collected by using a questionnaire developed by the researcher. It contains two sets of questions. The first set was made to find out the background data of the respondents, including the year of enrollment in the university, the scores obtained in the class, language(s) spoken at home, duration of studying English, and the place(s) of studying English. The second set contains five questions as follows:

- In the class of Cross Culture Communication, especially during the first half of the semester, English was used as the language of communication in the class. The lecturer taught in English, and all students had to speak in English too. In general, how did you feel about this? Explain
- How did you feel about using English in giving presentation in the class? Explain
- How did you feel about using English in asking questions and answering questions in the class? Explain
- How did you feel about listening to the lecture in English in the class? Explain
- Do you think that this policy must be used in all other classes in English Department? Why?

The questionnaires were distributed several weeks after the students' scores on the subject were released. This was intended to reduce the possibility of bias in the students' answers.

The respondents' answers were coded based on the keywords appear in the answers. Similar answers were classified and calculated. Each answer was carefully analysed and interpreted to determine the explanations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

General Feeling about the Use of English in Class Activities

In order to find out the students' feeling in general about the use of English in the learning process, researcher gave a question in the questionnaire as follows:

"In the class of Cross Culture Communication, especially during the first half of the semester, English was used as the language of communication in the class. The lecturer taught in English, and all students had to speak in English too. In general, how did you feel about this? Explain"

The responses were classified according to the feeling expressed by the respondents. The results show 6 students have positive feeling, 3 students have negative feeling, and 2 students have mixed
feeling.

Those with positive feeling give answers using words or expressions “feel better”, “strongly agree”, “good”, “agree”, “like”, “okay”, and “didn’t find any trouble”. The reasons given in supporting the positive expressions can be classified into two groups. First, the students have positive feeling because they were aware of the importance of practicing English including in classes of content subject. For example, respondent 7 writes: “I think it’s good because I feel that not all the class in ED would try to teach in English. So beside of improve our English it’s also practice our English”. Another respondent expresses: “I feel better than another class because of making a group discussion in order to improve our spoken language”, showing another situation in which the method of learning can help in reducing anxiety among students.

Other 3 respondents express negative feeling by using words or expressions “nervous”, “awkward”, and “so scare to speaking”. The negative feeling seems to be more related to limited English proficiency. In relation to this anxiety, respondent 9 said “First I [fell] so scare to speaking in front of the class especially to use English. I afraid to making mistake about my vocabulary or my grammar”.

Lastly, respondent 2 and 4 express a mixed feeling. Respondent 2’s feeling tends to be positive as he/she said: “I’m trying to get used to, and maybe its difficult but as long as I’m trying, I feel enjoy because this college, talking about culture, in many countries and also I’d like culture too, and make me feel exited to study about this”. This comment may indicate the role of the content of the subject. Students may feel better with the use of English when the content of the course is interesting for them. On the other hand, respondent 4 expresses mixed feeling which tends to be a negative one. He/she says:

“Nervous. Because, my speak English is not really good. Beside that, I have a vocabulary still a little. But, when the lecturer taught in English of communication in the class, I know what she / he said that. Only, when I want to speak, I don’t know what should I talk that.

This shows that the respondent can still be categorised as a passive user of English as he/she can understand the lecturer’s explanation, but finds it difficult to speak in English.

4.2 Students’ Attitude towards the Use of English in Giving Presentation

The question given in the questionnaire to investigate the students’ attitude specifically towards the use of English in giving presentation is “How did you feel about using English in giving presentation in the class? Explain”.

Regarding the use of English in giving presentation, data from the questionnaires show that most of the respondents have positive feeling. Their answers contain positive words or expressions “useful[]”, “great”, “agree”, “nice”, “interesting”, and “effective”. Five of these respondents basically consider the use of English in giving presentation an opportunity for them to practice English. Respondent 8, for instance writes: “English is important that is why I agree about using English in presentation because it pushed us to be able to speak and understand how to speak English”. Furthermore, respondent 3 emphasizes that English is “...very useful[] to train the student in order to be more confidence in front of the class”. Similarly, about the use of English in presentation, respondent 10 expresses: “It is interesting because it trained us to be confident to speak English in front of many people”.

Three respondents express mixed feeling. Respondent 2 writes: “I feel nervous, I’m so scared I’ll get wrong if I presentation using English language. I’d like presentation actually in Indonesian language.”. However, this respondent also maintains: “...But I feel that, this method is the part of me to study how to presentation with English language”. Furthermore, respondent 4 feels “...nervous...” when because was not ready for the presentation due to lack of comprehension of the material. However, this respondent also says that “...if I know and understanding my material, I am feel enjoy to presentation my material.”. Similarly, respondent 6 answers “I feel nervous at the first time but afterall, I enjoy using English giving presentation as long as I fully understand about the presentation that I’d give”. It can be seen again that the awareness of the importance of practicing English can reduce the negative attitude of a student, as can be seen in respondent 2’s response. Differently, the problems faced by respondent 4 and 6 are more related to their level of comprehension of the material. This may show that the level
ability in English also has an influence. Finally, one respondent expresses negative feeling “It’s rather difficult”, but the he/she does not give further explanation.

4.3 Students’ Attitude towards the Use of English in Asking and Answering Questions

In terms of the use of English in asking and answering questions, the question given in the questionnaire is “How did you feel about using English in asking questions and answering questions in the class? Explain”. The answers are balanced between negative and positive opinions. Six respondents give negative opinion by using words / expressions “difficult”, “nervous”, “afraid”, and “hard”; while five respondents express positive feeling reflected in words like “useful[1]”, “enjoy”, “agree”, “good”, and “nothing wrong”.

Related to the negative opinions, the first reason identified is limited vocabulary. This is expressed by respondent 2 who writes: “Actually, difficult, very difficult, because I have to digesting a word by word and I’m getting nervous too”. Similarly, respondent 9 expresses: “Sometimes I feel so nervous because I don’t know in my vocabulary so [I’m] afraid to ask the teacher when I have questions”. The second reason related to the negative feeling is the fear of the lecturer’s reaction as it is expressed by respondent 4: “I am afraid, because in my mind, when I asking or answering questions, my lecturer will be angry. If she / he didn’t understanding my question or answer. Or she / he will be come back to ask me again and I don’t know what should I answer”.

Meanwhile, in terms of positive feelings, four respondents explain that the use of English in asking question brings an advantage for them. For example, respondent 3 expresses: “I think, it’s very useful[1] for each student to be more focus on the material and by using English they will be confidence in using English as long as the material going on”. The benefit of being confidence is also expressed by respondent 11, while respondent 8 considers the requirement to use English in asking questions helps to “...improve ability in speaking English”. In addition, respondent 6 expresses: “I enjoy using English whether to ask or answer questions as long as I fully understand about what the subject”.

This point is quite critical. Considering that more respondents felt difficulty in asking questions in English, the requirement to use English in that particular activity needs to be reconsidered.

4.4 Students’ Attitude towards the Use of English in Lectures

The question given in the questionnaire to find out the students’ opinion about the use of English in lectures is “How did you feel about listening to the lecture in English in the class? Explain”.

It is interesting to see that 9 of the 11 respondents give positive responses. Some keywords or expressions identified are “excited”, “easy”, “good”, “amazed”, “enjoy”, “improve our ability”, “satisfied”, “like”, and “understood”. It is more interesting to realize that the respondents focus more on the benefit of the use of English for the improvement of their language skill, rather than for their comprehension of the course content. For example, respondent 8 writes: “I felt satisfied because it didn’t only help to improve our English but also to improve our listening skill”. The benefit related to language improvement is also reported by respondents 3, 7, 9, and 10. This phenomenon seems to be related to a finding in a previous research stating that the students who were taught with English could feel improvement in their English skill, but they still doubted their level of understanding on the course content (Chang cited in Kantavong 2015, p. 86).

On the other hand, two respondents give rather negative opinions by answering “Sometimes I could understand” and “Sometimes confused with new vocabulary”. These two answers might still have positive element as the two respondents use the word “sometimes”, showing that other times they could still understand. However, considering the habit of Indonesian people who like using the word “sometimes” for hedging, it can be said that the two respondents actually felt difficulty many times.

4.5 Students’ Opinion about the Policy of Using English as the Language of Instruction

Finally, this study also tries to find out the students’ opinion about the policy of using English as the language of instruction by asking the question: “Do you think that this policy must be used in all other classes in English Department? Why?”

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In response to this question, seven respondents (respondent 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) give positive response. Basically, they agree with the policy, and most of these respondents support their answers with the reason that the policy will help them to improve their English skill. In addition, one of them writes that the policy will encourage students to study hard. He/she says: “Yes, because it is can increase proclivity of student to more study, study, and study. This policy which given by lecturer in all other classes for student. So, the students will be change the ways their study to become goodly”.

It is important to note some contrastive comments from other respondents. Firstly, respondent 1 writes: “I don’t think so because English Department is not only lecturing English materials”. It is true that not all courses in English Department are about English. There are courses about Indonesian culture and language in which English is not needed as the language of instruction. It is also interesting to see the comment from respondent 2 who says:

“I think everybody needs to adjustment. we know that we major is English, but we needs adjustment, because when we’re in Senior High School we are using Indonesian language. So that’s why we need adjustment. For step by step like in semester 1 we have to using English when we do task, or answering question, and in semester 2, we try to presentation like that”.

This comment warns that it is necessary to consider to what extent English can be used in class activities, and in what type of activity. It might be wise to apply the policy to low extent for first-semester students, and to increase the level of English use step by step according to the length of study. In addition, respondent 5 emphasizes that “If English using for skill it’s good...”. Most probably, what this respondent means is that it is good to use English for courses focusing on the improvement of language skills, such as speaking and listening classes. This respondent suggests that it is better to use Bahasa Indonesia to “study about theory or History”. A similar opinion comes from respondent 6 who writes: “...For lecture class, I think it’s not necessary to used this kind of policy”. Considering these responses, it is then important to reconsider the objective of learning at the English Department.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In general, it can be concluded that most respondents in this study have positive opinion about the use of English as the language of instruction. This particularly appears in giving presentation and listening to lectures. In contrast, for asking and answering questions, half of the respondents still have problems due to limited vocabularies and the feeling of anxiety (psychological factor). About the policy of using English as the language of instruction, while some students feel happy, some others feel that it would create certain problems.

Based on the findings in this study, it is suggested that the implementation of the policy to use English as the language of instruction needs to consider two important factors. The first one is the level of students’ English proficiency, and the second one is the psychological factor.

References

