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Chapter

Do Computer Science Students Always Talk about Computer and Technology in English Class?: Exploring the Reflection of Mind from the Field of Study

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Abstract

What someone learns is something that makes them curious. Curiosity builds interest and learning something based on interest is pleasant. Such feeling is necessary for teaching–learning activity to achieve the objectives of the lesson. Bringing to the context of teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL), a question is proposed. Do computer science students always talk about computers and technology even in English class? Based on the existing literature on English for Specific Purpose (ESP), EFL students will be given material lessons based on their field of study. But, are they happy with it? Are they not bored to talk about similar topics in every situation? Or should we make some changes to adjust the material of ESP to their interest? How about their need to learn English? This section will bring you to another view of understanding students’ interests in the aim of preparing material lessons in English class. By combining it with psycholinguistics, it is expected that the discussion provides an understanding to renovate the objectives of the lesson as well as the material lesson in English class, especially for teaching EFL in higher education.

Keywords: lesson material, non-native English students, higher education, EFL teaching, psycholinguistics

1. Introduction

After graduating from senior high school, students who are disposed to continue their study in higher education should register to college or university and choose a study program to focus on. The variety of study programs offered by each university is not always similar. Nevertheless, the study program that is most attractive to the students can be predicted.

The development of technology as well as its usage requires workers to employ. Besides, the extensive spread of its users’ needs well-trained technicians to handle the
problems [1]. This condition can be inferred to state the reason why computer science becomes one of the most wanted study programs.

The fact is that when students make a registration to a certain study program, they first need to follow some steps of selection. Hence, the announcement of the acceptance becomes the expected news to get. The question is: Do they always get accepted in a study program as they expect? How if they are not accepted into a study program that they are interested in?

Some students can continue their study in the program they have chosen after they get the acceptance letter. While the other who does not get it, by some considerations, can take another program. Taking such a solution does not mean that the students have an interest in it. It might not belong to their interest. If they do so, it possibly affects their study during semesters [2]. Students that belong to their interest tend to have more spirit and motivation in accomplishing their study. They even tend to get a better score. On the other hand, students with lack of interest tend to have less motivation and spirit so that they should have more effort to accomplish their studies. This condition creates so many bridges to learn from any viewpoint.

Other than the issue of interest, the term “wrong major student” is created to refer to the students who study in a certain program as they are not expected [3, 4]. This is interesting. Differing from their interest, wrong major students tend to think that they should not have to take the course. But, should they move to another study program and repeat their registration and education from the first semester? The funny fact is that some experts come from the assumption that they belong to the wrong major students, but they continuously study about the things that actually they have no interest in. Some people will believe it is fate and others just call it luck.

Getting awareness of the issue makes a consideration of the topic that the students will choose while they have to talk about something. To the subject that becomes their concern, the topic must be related to that study program [5, 6]. What if the subject is supplementary that might possibly not have an obligation to talk about a similar topic as the concern of a study program, like English?

Let me share an experience of teaching English. The material that is already arranged is about general English. As the junior lecturer, at that time, I just followed the material. The students look bored. Moreover, the material is about writing. Trying to give a response and solution to the condition, I give the students a chance to write something based on their interests. They can decide the topic of their writing. The result is that they are happy to go with the direction and finish their work with a smile on their face. They are excited to choose the topic they want to write about. They also become more aware to consider what they should do. The direction is not only about asking them to write a paragraph but with certain instructions, like making a good flow of information by following some steps and considering the coherency and the cohesion of the sentences within a paragraph. They pay attention to it. And the result is amusing. Almost all of them follow the pattern of paragraphs as instructed. The flow of information is also clear enough to be understood. This is interesting because a little change can make a big impact. It can be said that the lecture is successful in delivering the material and the students are successful in accepting the material. Their work shows that the students can achieve their goals in English class, especially in writing. It is also beneficial to be used in another class when they are asked to write something.

When there is an expression that experience is the best teacher in life, it is true. Since then, I think of making some renewal to the material lesson, the task, and the activity during the class. Trying to understand the students’ responses takes me back to the essentiality of English classes for non-native speakers. Should they be given the topics
based on their field of study? Should they always talk about it? However, material lessons can be one of the ways that it possibly makes their moods change and it is helpful to achieve the goal of teaching-learning activity.

2. The application of English learning for non-native students

   English in general context is seen as a language that is known by people from all around the world and becomes the number one choice of language to communicate with people from other countries. Hence, English language users are spread across the nation. Some countries make it the primary language, others make it a secondary and the rest make it a foreign language. Whatever the usage, English has a standard structure and rules that should be understood by the user, whether it is a native or non-native language.

   In a country like Indonesia where the use of English is only for a certain context, English has become a subject of the lesson in school, starting from kindergarten to higher education. The learning material is determined differently for each level of education. Material delivered to the students of kindergarten is generally about the study of recognizing vocabulary, while elementary school to senior high school in normal conditions, tends to study sentence and grammar. Nevertheless, higher education has no identical material. Some of them organize the material into general English and others make it more specific to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) [7].

   Besides, the material can also be differentiated by the facilities and the environment. The facilities of English learning can refer to the teachers’ or lectures’ competence and other supporting environments. In the city of a developing or developed country, sometimes they have an international school. Seeing the result of students’ skills, it is assumed that the curriculum for English lessons is different from the normal school. Students of international kindergarten have been able to master more vocabulary, have more proper pronunciation, and can speak in English even if their grammar is still incorrect or they still mixed their language with their first language [8, 9]. It is stupendous. Yet, the assumption is that they have their own standard while arranging the material lesson and they have their own method of learning. Moreover, their environment also supports their learning so that the students do not only speak in English when they are in school but also outside the school. Seeing the facts, it means that schools with good facilities for English learning will provide better materials and methods than schools with no facilities.

   Let us see a normal school in a non-native English-speaking country. The area of school can define their frequency and familiarity with the English Language. Schools in town or village may not be similar to the schools in the city. Students in a city tend to be more fluent in speaking English since they are more affected by westernization. Meanwhile, students in town or village rarely use English and it makes them not as skilled as students in the city [10].

   Take an example of the students who live in a small town of Center Java, namely Purwokerto, where English is rarely used as a communication language [11]. High schools in that town do not always have proper facilities for students to learn English. Only those whose family belongs to the upper class have facilities to join a paid English course beyond their formal school. There are also students with a high interest in English who try to learn autodidact by watching the video on YouTube. This condition makes not all of the students have good skills in using the English language. The discrepancy is felt when students from different high schools join together at one
university. English classes have to organize and apply the curriculum and lesson material that is able to reach all of the students with any level of mastering English.

Based on the author's experience of teaching the ESP in higher education for economic study programs in a college located in the village of Center Java, Kemranjen, the material of the lesson discusses identical and specific terminologies in that field. The study of English focuses on the application of economic terminologies to a sentence, matching the answer choices to the blank space of a sentence. Nevertheless, the activity seems not to correspond with the student's condition. Their English skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking are still basic. It makes the lecturer initiative to teach them another thing beyond the material. If a need analysis is conducted, they might tend to require the basic material lesson, like making sentences, learning pronunciation, and listening. The understanding of the meaning of certain terminologies is important but it can be obtained in other subjects that are specifically provided to deliver in their study program. They can find the equivalence of certain terms by checking the dictionary since their module is dominantly written in Indonesian. Hence, the discussion about a term and its position in a sentence become less unnecessary since their basic skill like arranging the sentence in English is still far from perfect. This condition shows that ESP becomes imprecise to be applied for students with a level of basic English when the definition suggests ESP be implemented for students in an advanced level of English mastery. Considering the condition gives an assumption that education level seems cannot always determine the student's level of mastering English skills. Furthermore, the uniformity of lesson material can be a matter. Their understanding of certain material could be different. As an example, students whose education in high school is familiar with the term “verb 3” will be confused if in their higher education, the lecturer mentions it as verb-ed. It seems that the terminology refers to the basics, but the different naming of it possibly makes the students feel confused. It might be solved after several meetings, they become familiar with the terms. Meanwhile, the objective of the lesson is similar, that is to make the students acknowledge the variety of verb formation.

Another example of ESP application in higher education based on the author's experience happens to communication science students. In their material lesson, the topic can be categorized into specific knowledge that is in line with the study program. The student's skill varies from basic to excellent. For students whose English skill is good, English class seems meaningless. One day in a discussion session, when the students are given a question about their expectations of joining English class, a student with good skill in English stated that she does not have any expectations. She might realize that their classmate has a different level of English mastery, whereas the lesson material given should reach all of the levels by having an English skill that is better than the other students, she feels that she is dominant and has been capable of it. Moreover, she joins a paid English course that concerns a specific skill, that is speaking class in one reputable course institute. The purpose of the lesson activity seems focused and she understands what she should reach by joining the course. It affects her thought to think of an English class on campus as a subject to pass the semester. The lesson in English is seen containing instructions to do something and after accomplishing it, she thinks that her responsibility is over. The lesson is not really beneficial for them. It is regarded as another form of getting knowledge but does not really affect their improvement in English skills. On the other hand, students with basic English skills tend to make similar mistakes without any improvement. Similar to the good one, they think that joining the class is a requirement to pass the semester. They seem to lack the motivation to improve their English skills. They try to
do any task during the class with the help of the internet using software like Google. It is good for them to utilize the technology but it makes them have a high dependency and less thinking. Actually, it unconsciously happens but if the condition continuously happens, it can harm their brain and their skill in the future, whether for work or to survive in their life. Only a few students with high interest have a curiosity for the lesson. They pay attention to the material and can memorize the important knowledge that is obtained during a semester joining English class to be applied beyond the class.

In another context, the experience comes from the English class for higher education students majoring in computer science. Material of the lesson in the class is similar to the material in previous education, that is junior or senior high school. It talks about the types of English, part of speech, and grammar. The student seems like doing the assignment as examples are given but they look bored and not interested in joining the class. At the end of the semester, when the course is accomplished, there is no specific destination to go. The measurement of success in English class is only based on the score they achieve but the application to solve their problem in real life seems insignificant. Because of this, there is a need to make some changes.

In another semester, the curriculum is updated but still not based on the study program nor ESP for the students of computer science. It is arranged to be a general skill required for students in higher education that is to read and write an English journal article. In other words, the purpose of learning is to make the students have a skill in writing and reading an English journal article. As the purpose stated, the main material of the lesson is not about the terminologies in computers but the English journal article on the topic of computer and technology. As for killing two birds with one stone, using that material, it is expected that the students not only concern themselves with the terminology commonly used in the field of computer but they also study about the sentence pattern, both generally to deliver information and specifically to put the terminologies in the right place of a sentence. The students unconsciously learn more than one thing through one activity. The repetition of its activity through several meetings is helpful since the students do not have to study about grammar with the complicated rules, formula, and term as they dislike it, but they can get the benefit that is similar to the benefits when they learn about the sentence and its grammar of certain terminologies. It is also considerably effective because it corresponds to the characteristics of the students in this era [12]. Their generation seems identical with simple but instantly worked. At the end of the class, the students at least have a skill that can be used to be applied in another subject since an article journal is something that the student needs as references to enhance their knowledge and to write texts like a report or thesis.

The experience of teaching ESP in several fields of study provokes an initiative that the consideration during arranging the curriculum and the lesson material might be based on the purpose of English learning.

3. Exploring students’ competence and interest through English class

Exploration of English teaching and learning, especially for non-natives English students is limitless in any area. Various theorists of education methods proposed by experts from the education field give choices to believe and suppose. Some lecturers take it for granted and apply it in their class. The other examines the theories by conducting research in order to find the most appropriate method of teaching
English. Besides, some researchers make an exploration through a need analysis to get consideration in organizing and arranging the material lesson of English class for non-native English students. A curiosity leads to the question of whether there is any other method to get consideration while arranging lesson material? Let us see the facts and get the answer as your consideration to make some decision.

As it has been mentioned before, there is a need for analysis that the result of it is used as the consideration to create and arrange the material lessons based on the students’ needs. It is commonly executed by distributing questionnaires to the students to make sure they match the material and the participants. The questions are directly stated and sometimes they also provide some choices as the answer. If they do not choose A, they will choose B, and vice versa. The results seem under control but they cannot be said to be ineffective. The unclear limitation and regulation of applying ESP at the level of education also make it uneasy to be implemented. Meanwhile, plenteous research with other approach and methods is conducted. Reviewing the literature is always the thing to involve in their research. Unfortunately, the result does not really give the renewal since the research uses similar theory for similar objects. To give it a solution, enhancement of techniques to get consideration while arranging the material lesson is flowering. Innovation is needed by making collaboration across the study.

The recent literature states that the approach to learning can be viewed from the students’ states of mind [13]. Their psychological condition can support their ability to reach success in learning. Starting from the initial experience as mentioned in Section 1 to the teaching experience in Section 2, it arouses curiosity to answer the questions of what is on computer science students’ minds? What do students think while joining English class? Do the students of computer science always think about computers? Or do they have another topic on their mind?

Reviewing the literature from psycholinguistics and research carried out by Nida [14], it is proven that students do not always talk about computers. Although their everyday class dominantly talks about it, their interest in something can make it more memorable and it can change their moods during English learning as stated in the previous section. It is also seen as helpful to bring learning into the successfulness. Another research conducted by Nida found that the students of computer science tend to talk about the not-too-technical terminologies of computers when they are in a class where the subject is not concerned with computers. It can be seen from the result of the research when the students who join English class are instructed to mention the technical terminology in the field of computers. Their work shows that they tend to mention the terms that are familiar to the common users of computers and technology. Once again, their work shows what is memorable to them. These findings can be a consideration to organize the material lesson as well as help the lecture to determine the method of English learning for non-native speakers.

4. The purpose of English learning for non-native students in higher education

Whatever study program the student chooses in their university or college, there is an English subject that belongs to the list of lessons they have to take. According to the previous explanation about the application of ESP in English learning that does not always conform to the student's needs and the fact that the teacher or lecturer wants to make the implementation of ESP simpler by focusing more on the learning activity and arranging the lesson with the standard that they make by themselves, there is
a consideration of understanding the objective of the lesson. The consideration can come from the area of the institution, the level of students’ skill in English, and the environment.

Positioning the viewpoints of the students as participants, a clearer illustration might be gotten. When we think about one of the fields, that is, computer science, the assumption is that students of computer science must have an interest in its field. This is because it becomes the common reason for them to choose it as their study concern in higher education. On the other hand, the previous subsection describes the condition with the terms of wrong major students and there are students who come only to finish their education and get their bachelor’s degree without any interest in computer science. It means that not all of them must have an interest in the topic of computers. They might not think of computers all the time, including the time when they join English class. They tend to have the mindset that by joining English class, they learn about English, how to speak in English, how to write and read English text, and what the English speaker says. Their needs tend to lie in improving their skill in the English language for general context. Understanding the facts of it and terms of ESP for the context of EFL, it is possible to give a reformation to the purpose of English class.

Besides, outlining the condition of non-native students in English class makes a presupposition that English class can be focused to another specific purpose, like academics, even for the students who study computer science. Apart from considering competence, the needs of students in higher education are broader. English lessons that they have gotten in their previous education might not really be enough to make them have an understanding of reading English journal articles or writing it. Another lecturer also gives suggestions to English material lessons for delivering the material of reading and writing journal articles. Research carried out by Huzniati proves that students of computer science expect that English class can give them skills that are needed for their work, like speaking and reading [15]. However, the experience stated in the previous subsection gives the author’s conclusion that the purpose of the class should be to point to the more specific skill that is useful to be applied to another subject, and the way to achieve it is by making the students happy [16, 17]. The lecture can create a fun class by arranging the material based on their interest.

5. Conclusions

Talking about the reflection of the field of study, the discussion in this chapter proves whatever the study chosen by the students in their higher education level does not mean that they always talk about it. They can talk about other things based on their interest. And understanding the topics that lie on their mind is beneficial to help the lecturer achieve success in learning.
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