

MULTILINGUALISM IN AN ESP ONLINE LEARNING CLASS A CASE IN AN ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL COURSE

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Abtrak

ESP - *English for Specific Purposes* (Bahasa Inggris untuk bidang ilmu tertentu) secara daring menggunakan cara yang berbeda dalam berkomunikasi karena mahasiswa dan dosen tidak bertemu secara luring. Mereka bertemu secara daring. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari bahasa-bahasa yang digunakan antar mahasiswa dan dengan dosen pengampu dalam kelas ESP daring dan untuk mengetahui sikap mahasiswa terhadap penggunaan multi-bahasa dalam berkomunikasi di kelas tersebut. Kuesioner disebarakan kepada 24 mahasiswa dalam satu kelas mata kuliah *English for Professional* di *BINUS Online Learning* sekaligus sebagai partisipan dalam penelitian. Data dari hasil kuesioner dianalisis secara kualitatif dengan penyajian dalam bentuk prosentase. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa para partisipan mempraktekkan multi-bahasa di kelas daring baik untuk berinteraksi maupun berkomunikasi. Partisipan menunjukkan sikap baik positif maupun negatif terhadap penggunaan multi-bahasa dalam berinteraksi dan berkomunikasi dalam kelompok mereka maupun dalam kelas walaupun mereka paham jika seharusnya hanya Bahasa Inggris yang boleh digunakan untuk berkomunikasi dan berinteraksi dengan teman satu kelompok atau kelas.

Kata kunci: multibahasa, ESP, pembelajaran daring, sikap mahasiswa

Abstract

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) in online learning classes has its way of communicating since the students do not meet physically because they only meet virtually. The study aims to find out the languages used among the online learning students in an ESP online classroom, especially in interacting and communicating with one another in a team and virtual classroom, and to figure out the students' attitude toward multilingualism in ESP online classroom communication. A questionnaire is distributed to 24 students joining an English for Professional class at BINUS Online Learning as the participants. The data from the questionnaire is analyzed qualitatively in the form of percentages. The result shows that the students apply multilingualism in the online learning class for interaction and communication. They show both positive and negative attitudes toward the use of many languages in their team and classroom communication while English is required as the means of communication and interaction in the team and classroom.

Keywords: multilingualism, ESP, online learning, students' attitude

1. Introduction

The sophisticated and high invention of technology has influenced the way humans live. Not only the way they apply technology in the industry but also the way the education system runs. education system including teaching learning in the classroom relies on technology to support the activities into easier and more interesting activities (Sert & Boynuegri, 2017). In education, the way of teaching-learning has come to the stage where the more intelligent way of teaching is conducted, especially when the internet has been invented. It creates a new method of education with online learning. It enables an institution to open virtual classes in the types of e-learning and online learning which nowadays mostly are carried out in higher education. This system enables the students to interact with lecturers and among the students through the Internet.

With the flexibility in accessing the Internet, online learning students are not only from one area which commonly shares the same language, but they can be from many different places, different cities or provinces, or even different countries where they share a different language(s). Normally, when the students are from different countries, English as a lingua franca is used as the means of instruction and communication. However, when online learning institution is running in Indonesia like BINUS Online learning, Bahasa Indonesia is used as the means of communication and instruction in all online courses except the English course.

Previous research studies on multilingualism in higher education. The result shows that multilingualism support students to understand the material and broaden their knowledge that is conducted in face-to-face classes (Neeta: 2014, Okal: 2014, Lowry: 2009). Not only in multilingualism, previous research in online learning have also been conducted. However, there is still no research on multilingualism in the online learning system, specifically, the studies on the language(s) used in interaction and communication among students and lecturers in an ESP class in an online learning program. Therefore, this stud is aimed first to find out the languages used among the online learning students in an ESP classroom, especially in doing the team assignments and in the virtual classroom communication, and second, to figure out the students' attitude toward using multilingualism in ESP classroom communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Multilingualism in Higher Education

Multilingualism can be defined as the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native-like proficiency (Okal, 2014). In this era, most young generation speaks more than one language since it is required in global world communication (Smith, 2017). For communication purposes, languages can be regarded as official or unofficial, native or foreign, and national or even international. Supporting the advanced technology, adults use languages to communicate with other people across the globe for many reasons such as for doing business or proposing a higher level of education abroad which requires an international language i.e. English.

Having the ability to speak more than one language is an advantage for adults because knowing more than two languages allows them to communicate with many people in both personal and professional contexts (Okal, 2017). In a personal context, adults can share knowledge or engage in friendships with people around the globe which will be a great benefit since they can learn about the culture in context. Moreover, having the ability to speak many languages in a professional context, will lead to success in dealing with academic and business lives.

In the context of higher education, multilingualism refers to a process of ‘sense-making’ in that students can get acquisition of subject knowledge which includes an ability to bring together knowledge and information in solving real-life problems. (Neeta, 2014) (Cenoz & Gorter, 2010). In Indonesian higher education, students should acquire other languages besides the formal national official language, Bahasa Indonesia. Indonesia has about 713 native languages spreading across the whole islands in Indonesia (Riza, 2008), such as Java Island which has at least three languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, and Madurese.

Before entering higher education in Indonesia, most adults normally have acquired at least two languages; their native language from the place of origin and the national language, Indonesian or Bahasa Indonesia. Moreover, some of them, the Muslims, acquire Arabic since it is a part of their religious study, even from the very beginning before the formal study. Entering junior high school, they are exposed to learning English as a foreign and international language, which is continued to their senior high school. However, it does not guarantee they acquire enough English for communication and interaction. Therefore, they still must learn English at the tertiary level of education.

2.2. Online Learning

Over the last two decades, e-learning and online learning have become more popular that some universities or educational institutions start to run this system. According to Watson and Kalmon (2005), online learning is a virtual system of education using the internet that enables students to study without physically coming to the real classroom but in the virtual classroom. This virtual classroom is facilitated in the type of Learning Management System (LMS) which provides an access to instructional materials as well as facilitates interaction among teachers and students (Bakia, e.al., 2012)

This LMS is an e-learning platform of software including a range of services that assist teachers with the management of their courses (Ouadoud, et al, 2018), (Rhode, et al, 2017). By using this tool, teachers and students are connected. Generally, for conducting a course, an LMS provides rooms for downloading materials, uploading assignments, writing in the discussion forum, scoring system, and schedules. Besides the LMS, online learning usually provides video conferences as another platform that can be used as a virtual classroom in which students and teachers can have live interaction (Meissner, 2017)

The LMS also provides rooms to allow teachers to place some materials related to the course where the students can access and learn the materials which can be in the form of PowerPoint presentations, documents, online resources, audio, and video materials. The room for assignments provides the teachers to store the assignments for the students, and the students can download the assignments and upload the results. In the same place, the teacher can download, check, and score the result. A room used by both students and teachers for discussion is Discussion Forum which provides online interaction among them in written form..

Assignment in online learning education is an important part of the learning process, with two types of assignments: individual and group assignments. The aim of giving assignments is to implement what the students learned in a specific context. Toward the end of the course, students usually comment on how much they have learned while collaborating on team assignments (Lowry, 2009). Team assignments force the students to communicate as team members to solve the problems or case studies given. It gives the room for the students to use many languages to communicate the case.

3. Research Methods

The participants of this research study were 24 out of 27 students of DJEA class in ESP English for Professional Course at BINUS Online learning in the 2nd semester – 2nd period.

Three students did not give any responses to the questionnaire. They were between 18 – 46 years old with ranges in the profession as employees, housewives, civil servants, and students only. The questionnaire consisting of open and closed questions was used as the instrument to collect the main data. The questionnaire consisted of six parts: the personal background, educational background, the language used during school time, working experience and the language used in working place, information about the language, the use of the language both in general and in the English for Professional class, and the last is the attitude toward the use of languages in an online learning class. The result of the questionnaire was used as the data and was analyzed qualitatively using the percentage and description.

4. Result and Finding

The online learning program at Binus University requires all students to take an English course, namely English for Professionals. In this course, students learn all English language skills; reading, listening, writing, and speaking. The class interaction in this class mainly uses the LMS and Video Conferences. However, for interpersonal communication among students and student-lecturer communication, they make use of other devices of advanced technology such as WhatsApp Messenger.

BINUS Online LMS provides two rooms for discussions; a classroom and a team room. It is required that in the whole class communication, including classroom, team room, or even personal among students and to the teachers is only English used. However, since they acquire more than one language, they tend to use other languages than only English in the team room or via messenger to do group assignments or among students within the class to communicate the materials.

4.1. Languages Used by the Students

As it is previously explained that although only English as a lingua franca is required and used in all classes' interaction, other languages are used. It is influenced by some languages they acquire as it can be seen in chart 1 that students come from many places which means they share different native languages. 50% are from the West Java area that normally speaks Sundanese as the native language, except those who are from Jakarta and mostly use Bahasa Indonesia. 16.5 % is from Central Java and another 16.5% is from East Java. In both areas, most people speak Javanese but with different accents. 12.5% of students are from Borneo Island and only 4.5 % are from Timor Leste, a neighboring country of Indonesia which uses four languages in this country.

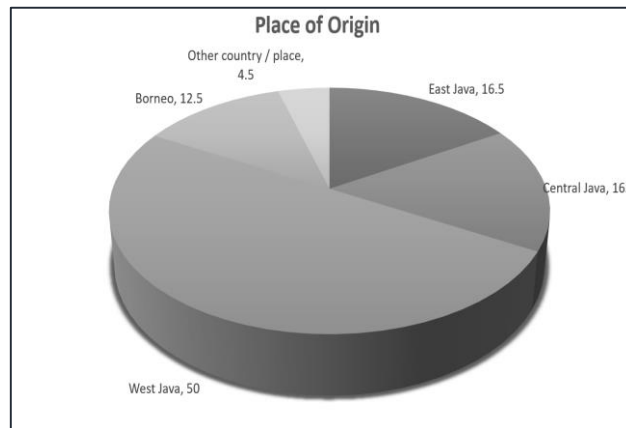


Chart 1: Students' Place of Origin

Chart 2 shows that students acquire more than one language or even 3 languages. Surprisingly, the highest one about 62 percent acquires English as the third language. The consequence of being a third language, it is not as fluent as the first and second languages (Okal, 2014). Bahasa Indonesia is in second place either as the first or the third language. It is accepted since almost all students are from Indonesia and it is common to use Bahasa Indonesia. As the first language, Bahasa Indonesia is used by about 42% of the students. It is because most students' place of origin is in the area of West Java where Jakarta is placed. People in Jakarta normally use Bahasa Indonesia for communication but in many versions of the dialect (Cohn and Ravindranath, 2017)

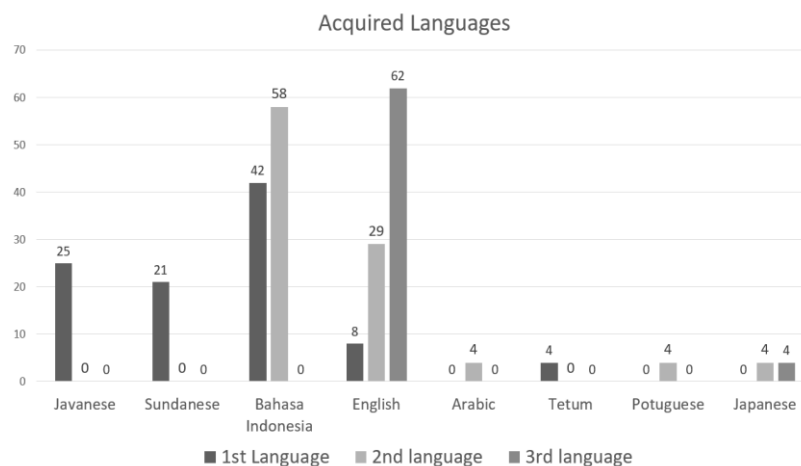


Chart 2: Languages acquired by the Students

Sundanese is used by about 21% of students as their first language, while only 8% place English as their first language. Tetum, a native language in Timor Leste, is used only

by a student as the first language while there are three other languages; Arabic, Portuguese and Japanese used as the second languages and used by each four percent of the students.

The result indicates that multilingualism happens among the students since they acquire more than a language to communicate. This creates communication by using many languages among students but still only English is used by the lecturer in the ESP class.

4.2. Student Attitude on using English in English Professional Class

In the English for Professional class, the main language is English and it is used as the means of instruction and communication in this class, either in the LMS classroom forums and assignments as well as when they join the video conferences.

Chart 3 is the result of students' perception of English and other languages for their needs in the future and whether mastering English as well as the national and native languages is important for them. In this chart, it can be seen that all students agree and even strongly agree that it is important to master many languages. The reason is they think that mastering many languages will be an advantage for their future career. Interestingly, one of the students gives a written response that mastering many languages is prestigious that can create a feeling of pride.

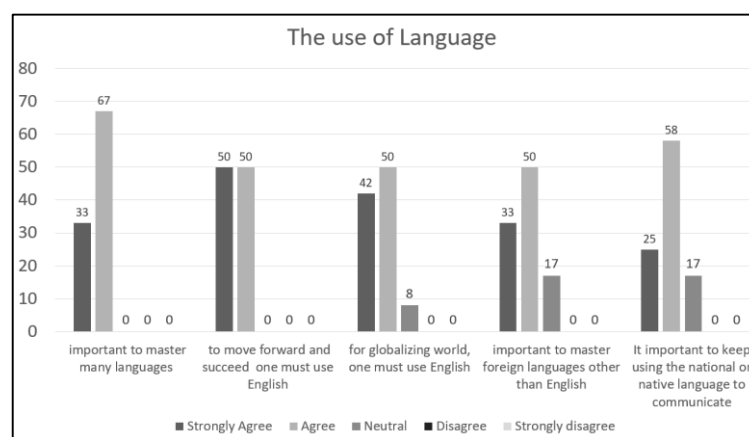


Chart 3: Students' perception of the use of language(s)

It can be seen that 50% respondents agree and the rest strongly agree that mastering English is very crucial to move forward for their success since they target themselves to join the global world competition of jobs. It is supported by the next item asking whether mastering another foreign language (s) gives at least an advantage for them. The result shows that 17% are in the neutral position which means that they are not sure about it and they think that mastering English is enough. The rest states their agreement and strong agreement about

it. Something interesting is 83% agree and strongly agree that they have to keep their national or native languages for communication but 17 % are in a neutral position. It is good that according to Cohn and Ravindranath (2017), there is a decreasing use of the native language in Indonesia. The student's willingness to keep the native language for communication may support language extinction.

Chart 4 shows the students' attitude toward English in English Professional Class. All students agree and strongly agree that all should communicate in English. However, only 40 percent strongly agree to use another language (s) than English but 40 percent are not sure about it and 20 disagree with it.

Surprisingly, when they are asked whether they communicate in English with their team in doing the group assignment, only 22 percent agree with it which means that they use other languages to communicate with their team. The highest percentage goes to the neutral position which indicates that they do not always use English for communicating with the team since based on the comment they say that they use more Bahasa Indonesia than English and some of them use their native languages when they communicate with other persons who share the same language.

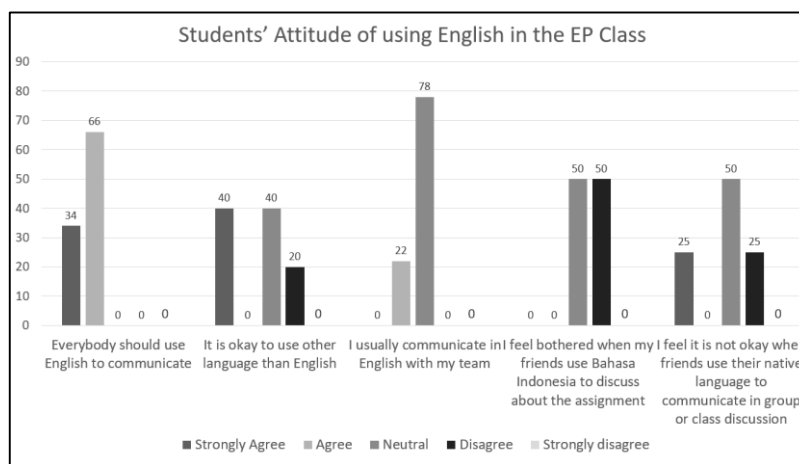


Chart 4: Students' perception of English Professional Class

From the chart, 50% of the respondents disagree whether they are bothered when team members communicate in Bahasa Indonesia. It is because most of them speak this language. 50% in a neutral position. Based on the responses, because they learn English, they want that English is used more but in their limitation of using English, using Bahasa Indonesia is accepted. Different from the use of Bahasa Indonesia, 25% do not feel alright when their team members communicate in their native language, 50% are in a neutral position but 25% other disagree with this opinion, which means that they accept the communication in the

team using native language. It happens when the team members share the same native language.

4.3. Student Attitudes on Multilingualism in Online Classes

Different from the previous discussion which focuses on seeking information about the use of English, this part is to discuss the students' attitude toward multilingualism in their classes. Chart 5 shows the result of 10 closed questions about multilingualism in their ESP classroom.

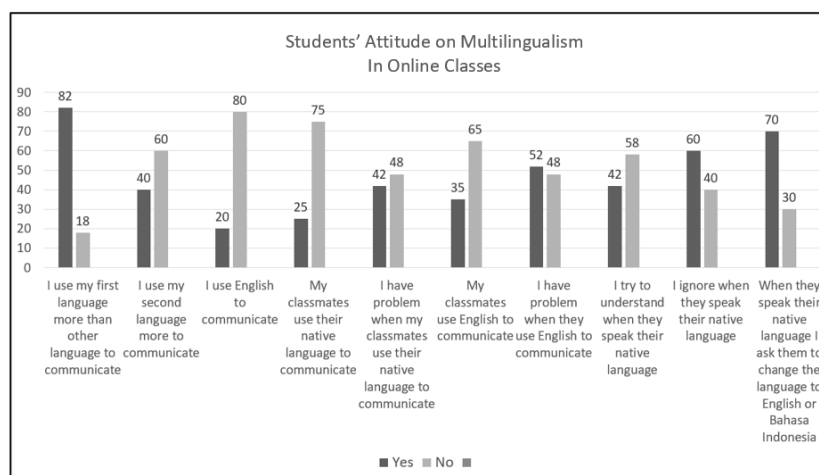


Chart 5: Students' Attitude of multilingualism in online learning classes

In the English for Professional class, 82% use their native languages to communicate although it violates the rule for class communication 40% state that they use a second language to communicate which means that most of them use both their first and second language to communicate but not English. It is supported by the result that 80% use other than English to communicate, leaving only 20% to communicate in English. 75% disagree that their classmate uses the first language, which means they use their second language. The reason they do not use English is that sometimes they do not get the meaning clearly or they are afraid to use it since they feel that their English is not good enough.

Discussing whether they face a problem when their classmates use their native language, 42% agree they have a problem, and leave 48% to have no problem since they share the same first language. The interesting part is that 65% of students communicate in languages other than English and 42% try to understand when classmates or group mates speak in English and 58% do not. This is obvious since there is no reason why they do not try to understand it, either they understand, or they do not but they do not bother to ask.

When they are asked their opinion or attitude toward the case when their classmates or group mates speak in their native language, 60% agree that they just ignore it because either it is their share the same language or they do not bother to ask about it. However, 40% respond that they do not ignore it asking them to change their language as it is shown in the next question that 70% ask their classmate to change their language to English or Bahasa Indonesia. Moreover, when the question is about the use of their native language, 42% try to understand although they do not share the same language and 60 % state that they just ignore them since they do not understand the language. This condition triggers them to change their language as 70% ask the team members to change their native language or Bahasa Indonesia into English.

The result indicates a positive attitude toward multilingualism in English for Professional Class. Although they speak more than one language, most students keep trying to use English as a means of communication and ask their classmates to change their language to English when they use other than English for communication. Few indicate a negative attitude towards keeping using the native language or Bahasa Indonesia although they understand that English is the means of communication in the ESP class.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the students share multilingualism in ESP classrooms since they share many different languages; the native languages, the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, English as lingua franca, and other foreign languages such as Japanese, Portuguese and Arabic.

Multilingualism can be found in ESP classes especially in English for Professional classes of BINUS Online learning and normally those languages are used in team room communication to make it easier to communicate. Some can accept and try to understand the different languages but others suggest they use English, the language they learn, and the lingua franca of this class communication.

This study is carried out for a small scope of research so that other researchers can dig up more potential multilingualism in the bigger scope of higher education with international students. Moreover, it is also interesting to research the attitude of the learners toward multilingualism.

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