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INVESTIGATING EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS TOWARD ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE (ESP) CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The objective of teaching ESP is to make students to be able to use English that is suitable in their major context. Teachers' perception in the classrooms is crucial in teaching – learning process. They can identify various points of view and gain a better understanding of who their students truly are. The aim of the present study is to investigate teachers' perceptions in vocational high schools toward ESP. In this study, researchers utilized descriptive qualitative method. The participants of the study were 10 EFL teachers in vocational schools. The method of data collection was done through questionnaire using Likert-scale. The findings of the study highlighted the focuses that were considered crucial by the teachers to the teaching of ESP, namely focus on learning, discipline, needs, skills and strategies, and also focus on language. Further, ESP teachers may need to put more emphasis on students' competency development. Also, the findings of this study suggest that as part of their ongoing professional development, teachers should be made aware of the requirements of their students in relation to their course curriculum, in addition to their own material expertise and teaching strategies. As a result, the students are able to relate to the ESP teaching purpose.

Keywords: *ESP, Teacher, Teachers' Perception, Vocational High School*

INTRODUCTION

English as a second or foreign language includes English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which is a subset of ESL. ESP refers to the teaching and study of English as a second or foreign language where the learners' purpose is to utilize English in a specific field (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013), with focus on the certain vocabulary and abilities necessary. In contrast to traditional English instruction, ESP requires that the teacher be skilled in a technical subject in addition to regular English.

The problem is, even though English should be taught to the students based on their major or fields, some teachers neglected to use the proper material. This situation has often arisen in vocational high schools, where the English teacher focused on the General English (GE) rather than English Specific Purposes (ESP) which is suitable to the aims of learning.

Teachers' perception can be crucial in deciding how to teach, whether in terms of the use of instructional methods or learning resources, in order to meet the learning objectives while teaching ESP. Perception typically leads to learning about subjects that are directly related to one's short-term objectives, but it may also lead to learning about subjects that are incidental to one's short-term objectives. Perception gets better with time and experience, and comprehension may be viewed as the training of attention. Jia (2004) states that knowing teachers' perspectives and beliefs helps to better understand their classroom actions and offers suggestions for developing teachers' practices. They can identify various points of view and gain a better understanding of who their students truly are. Teachers should be aware that their perceptions—and misperceptions—can shape their expectations for students in both positive and negative ways. This, in turn, can have an impact on students' performance in the classroom. The perception in the classroom involved the material used, tasks, students' vocabulary, and ability to achieve the learning of ESP. Those all are used and applied in teaching - learning process.

In Indonesia, not all of vocational schools applied ESP in learning English. Most of them still used the textbook of GE material which is the same with senior high schools. Vocational high schools have different major and each of them has different purpose in learning objectives. The use of ESP is a critical thing to make them are able using English based on their major. Nevertheless, some teachers do not considerate to use the convenient of ESP material in teaching English in vocational high school.

A particular ESP course concentrates on a specific field or line of work, such as Technical English, Scientific English, English for Medical Professionals, English for Waiters, English for Tourism, and so on. An ESP course like Environmental English can have broad effects despite having what seems to be a limited focus. Any medical profession can benefit from taking ESP classes, similarly as a foreign engineer can benefit from studying electrical engineering. Some ESP researchers support a "two-layer" ESP course, with the first layer encompassing all general information in the chosen subject of study and the second layer concentrating on the particulars of the student's chosen speciality (Tenieshvili, 2019).

Finding out how teachers use their perceptions in the classroom involves looking into the perspectives of language teachers (Farrell & Bennis, 2013). Empathy and other social and emotional learning (SEL) abilities must be developed from a teaching their perspective. In this situation, it is essential to develop and provide the most effective teaching expertise possible in order to meet the needs of the students. The process of perception also results in significant

experiences in the real world that help in developing the teaching-learning process. The practice, in general, was in conducting with the course's main objectives, which Belcher (2006), Dudley-Evans (2001), and Nelson (2000) all suggested. Therefore, the five primary focuses of teaching and learning should be on learning, needs, skills and strategies, discipline, and language.

Several previous studies have been conducted the perception towards ESP which focused on students or teachers. The study conducted by Khoirunnisa, Suparno, and Supriyadi (2018) on English for Specific Purposes examined how teachers and students experienced about teaching speaking in a tourism program. Saienko, Olizko, and Cunha (2021) attempted to look at how BA and BSc students and teachers perceived about encouraging creative thinking in ESP classes. Shi and Fan (2021) looked at the state of online ME education in China from the viewpoints of marine students and ME teachers in China. As a result, the previous research concentrated on both students' and teachers' perspectives.

It is necessary to investigate the teachers' perception in order to achieve a better understanding related to the students and learning process. After understanding the problems above, the aim of this study is to find out teachers' perceptions in vocational high school toward ESP. The research question was (1) what are teachers' perception in vocational high school toward English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The result of the present study can be used as references and implemented in teaching – learning for teachers in order to fulfill the requirements of learning objectives ESP in vocational high schools.

METHODS

The present study used qualitative research method in analyzing the data. The data of the study is related to EFL teachers' perception in vocational high schools toward English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Ten EFL teachers participated in this study. Each of them has either a master's degree in ELT or a bachelor's degree in English language. They are experienced English teachers who range between the 25–35 age group. The data were collected by using questionnaires. Ten closed-ended questions were chosen for the questionnaires, which looked into how teachers thought about ESP and how it was used. Since 5-point Likert-type scales are simple for respondents to understand and their data are generally simple to analyze, these scales were included in the questionnaire items to assess how respondents perceived about how teachers recognized ESP (La Marca, 2011). The results of questionnaires were provided in the form of chart by analyzing the focuses of ESP teaching.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This study investigated a number of data that focused on teachers' perceptions about ESP classes. They were grouped into five categories for ESP teaching: learning, needs, skills and

strategies, discipline, and language, which were taken from Basturkmen (2020), Belcher (2006), Dudley-Evans (2001), and Nelson (2000), respectively. Each main category was described in the following results.

1. Focus on Language

The finding was described as below:

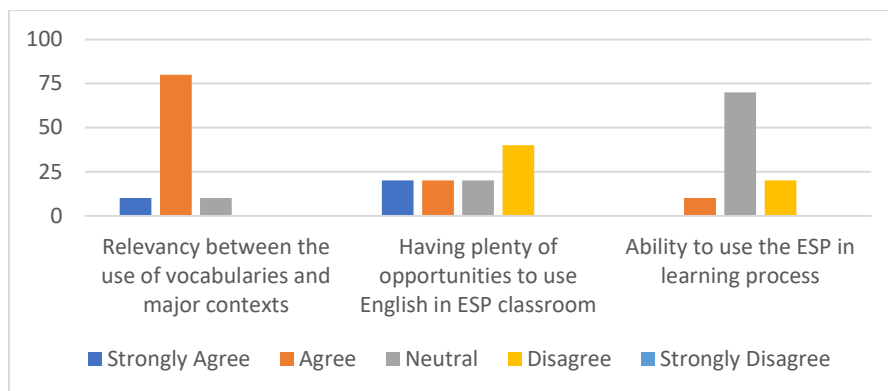


Chart 1. Focus on Language

From Chart 1, it was seen that most of the participants in this study had relatively positive perceptions over the statements (1) relevancy between the use of vocabularies and major contexts in which 10% strongly agree, 80% agree and 10% neutral. It shows that the dictions or vocabularies used in the textbook is aligned with major contexts. It helps students understand and relate the words with their daily routines and activities. While in the statements (2) having plenty of opportunities to utilize English in the ESP classrooms and (3) ability to use the ESP in learning process, the participants' perception was divided.

2. Focus on Learning

The finding was illustrated as follow:

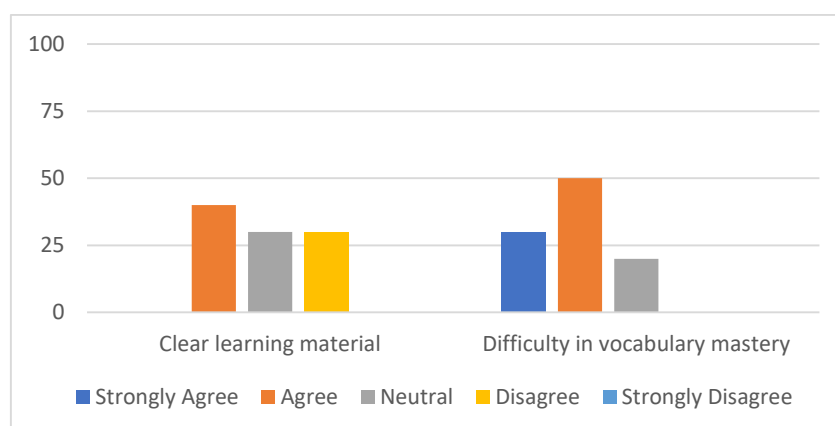


Chart 2. Focus on Learning

From Chart 2, it is shown that the participants have various perceptions toward whether the learning materials for ESP classrooms are clear or not. 70% of the participants showed positive

perception while the rest shows disagreement. While in the statement (2) difficulty in vocabulary mastery, most of the participants agreed that students experienced difficulties in mastering vocabulary. One of the key elements of language competency is vocabulary, which affects how effectively speakers, listeners, readers, and writers can communicate (Richards and Renandya, 2002: 255). Furthermore, language instruction is crucial in ESP courses. According to Wilkins (in Thornbury, 2002), without vocabulary nothing can be said and very little can be said without grammar.

3. Focus on Needs

The finding was shown as below:

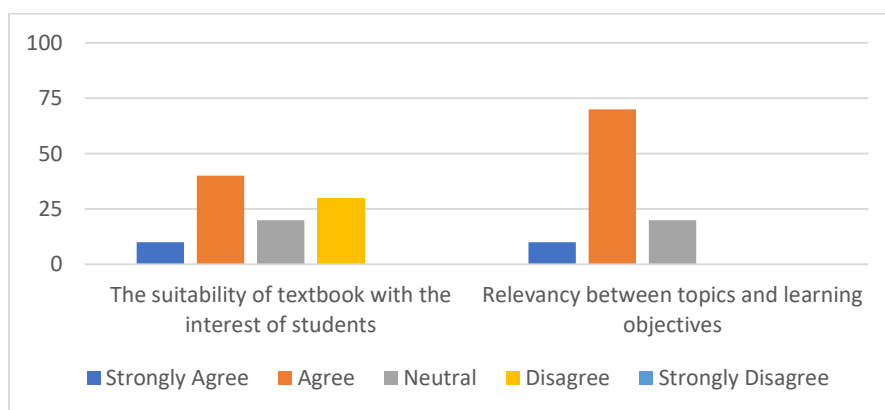


Chart 3. Focus on Needs

This chart expressed that the 40% of participants agree and 10% of them strongly agreed that the textbook is suitable with the interests of students. The statement (2) relevancy between topics and learning objectives also expressed positive perceptions from the participants. The purpose of English for Specific Purpose (ESP), as we all know, is to address the unique needs of the learners. The community as a whole must comprehend what ESP genuinely represents. It is a language strategy with the goal is to give learners with specifically identified objectives the language components they need to perform as professionals.

4. Focus on discipline

The finding was described as below:

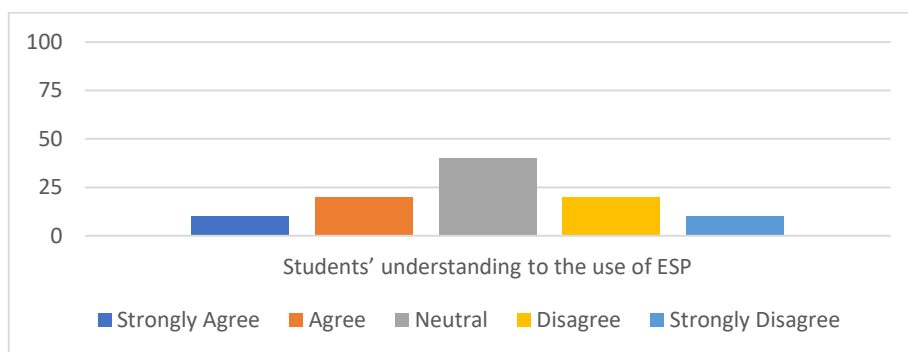


Chart 4. Focus on Discipline

Chart 4 indicates that participants had various perceptions toward students' understanding to the use of ESP. This reveals that one of the evident challenges should be encountered by ESP teachers are: Students' understanding to the use of ESP.

5. Focus on strategies and skills

The result was described as below:

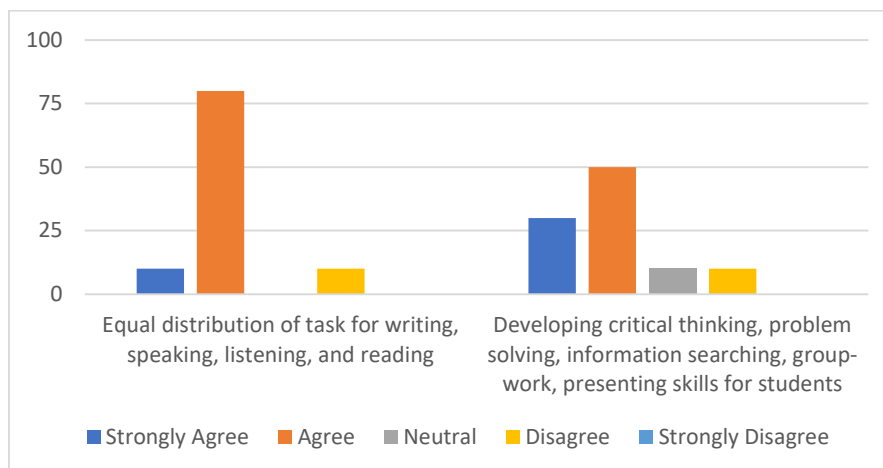


Chart 5. Focus on strategies and skills

The results in Chart 5 indicated that most of the participants had a generally good perception of the statements (1) Equal distribution of task for writing, speaking, listening, and reading, along with the statements (2) Developing critical thinking, problem solving, information searching, group-work, presenting skills for students. In addition to learning the language, students who participate in ESP also gain knowledge of topics that are relevant to their future employment. As a result, individuals simultaneously learn the language skills and the information necessary for their job.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study highlighted the focuses that were considered crucial to ESP teaching, namely focuses on learning, needs, skills and strategies, discipline, and language. Based on the findings mentioned above, ESP teachers may need to put more emphasis on students' competency development. Also, the results of this study thus imply that ESP teachers and students should collaborate to raise the standard of ESP programs. Additionally, teachers' professional development should focus on their awareness of students' needs in relation to their course curriculum as well as their understanding of topic and teaching strategies. As a result, the purpose of ESP instruction has impact for the students.

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