

Students' Perspective toward the Importance of Indonesian Language and Culture Course

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Abstract: The presence of the course of Indonesian language and culture in classes nowadays is often questioned. Is it still important? Is it useful? This paper aims to find out the extent to which the course of Indonesian language and culture is still considered important to be delivered in the classrooms, especially to college students majoring in English. Another goal is to know whether the presence of a lecturer is needed since students can easily search and find information in the internet. A set of questions is distributed to 66 English department students of semester 2 who take the course of Indonesian language and culture. The main question is whether Indonesian language and culture delivered in the classroom are still important and necessary. The analysis is done mainly based on their answers to portray their perspectives on the subject. The results show that to some extent most students consider that the course is important and the role of a lecturer in delivering the lecture is also important even though the internet helps them obtain information. Further implication is that the course of Indonesian language and culture requires a lecturer who is internet literate and able to use some modes as a tool for teaching and learning activities.

1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia) is the national language for all Indonesian people. It is Indonesia's formal language which is affirmed explicitly in 1945 Constitution. For most Indonesian people nowadays, this language is spoken and used since their birth date. Moreover, Indonesian language is one of the compulsory subjects in any schools in Indonesia, from elementary to high school levels. It is also compulsory for all students of college levels as Indonesian Laws (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 12 Tahun 2012 tentang Pendidikan Tinggi) (Republic of Indonesia President, 2012) and Decree of the Director General of Higher Education (Surat Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi) have governed (Rahayu, 2007). However, this does not mean that the result of high school national examination (UN-Ujian Nasional) in the course of Bahasa Indonesia is satisfying. Approximately 7,000 high school students did not pass the national examination in 2012; it was mostly due to the low scores of Indonesian language and Mathematics (Akuntono, 2012). With regard to this, Suchendar assumed that Bahasa Indonesia seems to be regarded as a

language that is difficult to learn (Suchendar, 2012). Therefore, he suggested that the ministry (of education and culture) should make a solution so that the course of Indonesian language becomes easier to understand. For this matter, Muhadjir (the 2012 Head of Language Development and Society Center, Agency for Language Development, Ministry of Education and Culture) said that it is necessary to refresh the skills of Indonesian language to all language and non-language teachers. He pointed out that the revitalized skills would bring a positive impact in the process of communicative and effective learning (Akuntono, 2012). This statement implies that teachers are needed in the classrooms; they should improve their skills; hence they can give positive effect in the learning process.

As globalization has spread throughout the world, Indonesia has become one affected country in which foreign languages and cultures are quite easy to enter, not to mention the rapidly growing internet which influences and makes the world boundless. In addition, the presence of several social media has quite influenced the way young people communicate, especially those who live in big cities. In this situation, (Sarwono, 2014) states, Indonesian youth, especially in the cities, are confronted with

the symbols of a variety of identities. Aspects from foreign cultures are easily integrated, replacing century old local traditions. The youth are susceptible to new ideas, norms, values, and habits/behavior from other cultures. The youth are perceived as that part of society most likely to engage in processes of cultural borrowing that are disruptive of the reproduction of traditional cultural practices, varying from modes of dress to language and ideologies.

The statement indicates that the foreign languages and cultures are quite influencing toward young people. Then she points out that one factor which most powerfully disseminates the culture of young people is media, which can be easily accessed using electronic devices. The information which comes from all over the world is easily transported into the living room (Sarwono, 2014). This description implies that to some extent foreign languages and cultures deployed in such media have influenced young people’s daily activities.

On the other hand, (Wardhani, 2016) concerns with the existence of local languages in Indonesia. She points out that to some extent the use of foreign languages has been developing in Indonesia and it may influence the local languages’ position. One worst side effect of this phenomenon, according to her, is that the local language may begin to extinct. Then she suggests that “the intensive use of Indonesian as the national language and English as a foreign language can be a potential threat to the extinction of local languages in Indonesia if it is not managed accordingly.” Her statement implies that nowadays, a large number of Indonesian people use Indonesian language much more frequently than local languages.

If Indonesian language is already extensively used by Indonesian people, then a question arises: is it necessary to present and deliver the course of Indonesian language and culture in the classroom? This paper aims to find whether the course of Indonesian language and culture is still important to be delivered in the classroom, especially for students majoring in English. It also investigates the role of the teacher in the classroom, whether her/his presence is considered necessary since students can easily find relevant sources through the internet. This study is significant for Indonesian lecturers who teach Indonesian language for students at college level. It is also necessary for those who are involved in high education curriculum for the answers can be valuable input.

2 METHODS

The participants of this study are sixty-six students of second semester majoring in English. These students take *Indonesian language, culture and society* as their compulsory course. They are asked to answer six questions regarding the importance of the course, interests in the project assigned, action as a lecturer, the importance of technology (internet) and the role of a lecturer.

For each of the questions (except question 4 and 5), the students are firstly provided with two poles of choices, e.g. unimportant ----- important. They could answer either in each of the poles or somewhere between the two poles. Then they are asked to provide reasons for their choices.

The answers of the questions become the data of this study. After the data are gathered, they are analyzed and discussed based on the level of importance of the course. The reasons or further explanation of each answer are also discussed.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There are six questions asked and distributed to the participants. Based on the answers, the whole results can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1: Summary of the results (in percentage).

| No | Topics of the questions | Yes | in between | No |
|----|--|-------------------|------------|------------------|
| 1 | Satisfaction on the English learning process | 83 satisfied | 8 | 9 unsatisfied |
| 2 | Importance of Indonesian language and culture course | 79 important | 13 | 8 unimportant |
| 3 | Interests in project/assignment | 73 interesting | 11 | 16 uninteresting |
| 4 | doing differently as a teacher | 79 do differently | 3 no idea | 18 no difference |
| 5 | Important use of technology | 95 | - | 5 |
| 6 | Role of lecturer and technology in the process of learning | 24 lecturers | 35 both | 41 technology |

In general, the findings suggest that a number of students consider that the course of Indonesian language and culture is still important, and they are still interested in doing the project assigned by their lecturer. They need to understand their own language and, culture, therefore, regular classes are still needed. It is also important to run a regular face-to-face session in which the attendance of the lecturer is needed to share ideas, knowledge and experiences so the students can directly learn from their lecturer, even though the internet may provide much information they need.

These findings can be examined in the following discussion, which is classified based on each question.

Question 1: *How do you feel about your English learning so far? (not satisfied ----- satisfied) Provide reason.*

This question is asked because the participants are of English Department, so that it is important to begin with this question. The answers can be examined in the following figure.



Figure 1: Students' answers on question 1 (in percentage).

Out of 66 participants, 83% think that they are satisfied since their English learning is useful, that their skills are improving, they are gaining more knowledge, able to learn from the lecturers, and the class is enjoyable. However, 9% of the participants think that they are unsatisfied. The reasons for this are that they lack grammar skills and they feel there is no improvement for their own skills. They also think that they do not understand some of the courses and that these courses are quite difficult for them. In addition, there are 8% of the participants who doubt whether they are satisfied or unsatisfied. This is because they have gotten bad scores in some courses and that some courses are not what they have expected.

Question 2: *How do you think of "Indonesian language, culture and society" course? (unimportant ----- important) Provide reason.*

The answers to this question can be portrayed in the following figure.

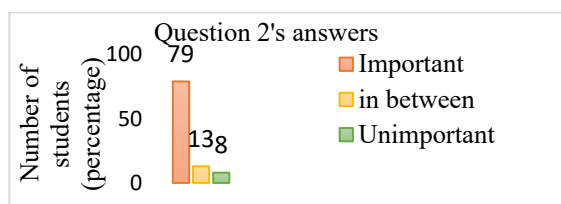


Figure 2: Students' answers on question 2 (in percentage).

From the answers collected, 79% of the participants think that the course of *Indonesian language, culture and society* is important as they could learn their own culture and country, learn to raise the value of Indonesia, and develop their knowledge about Indonesia. They also think that they should understand their own country first before learning foreign languages and culture, so they could introduce and promote Indonesia to other countries. On the other hand, 8% of the participants think that this course is unimportant since it is not English, unrelated to their major, and that they have already learned the course for more than 6 years. According to them, what they should learn is a course which is related to English, e.g. western culture. In addition, out of 66 participants there are 13% who are not sure whether this course is important or not. They think that the course is rather unimportant since they can learn from their parents, and to understand the culture and society is *sometimes* needed. However, a few of this group are afraid of not knowing their own culture.

Question 3: *What do you think of the assignments/project of the course? (not interesting ----- interesting) Provide reason.*

The answers to this question can be examined in figure 3.

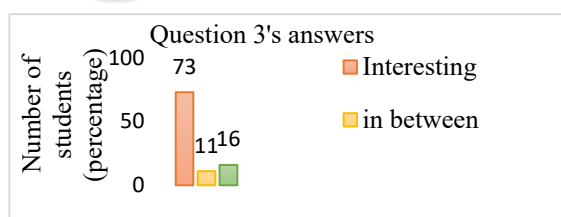


Figure 3: Students' answers on question 3 (in percentage).

At the end of the semester, the students are assigned to submit a project work which discusses certain topics. The project must be done in groups.

Out of 66 students, 73% think that the project is interesting because by doing such project they can learn and explore more about their own country's language, culture and society so their knowledge is improving. They may find certain cultures unique.

The project also makes them think creatively. In contrast, 16% of the participants think that the project is not interesting because it is useless, lack of materials, and they think that it should involve field study – not merely based on the activities in the classroom. Additionally, 11% of the participants could not decide whether the project is interesting or not. They consider that it is not an exciting task and to finish the project needs a lot of effort.

Question 4: *What would you do differently if you are the teacher of the course? State your reasons.*

The following figure portrays the answers to this question.

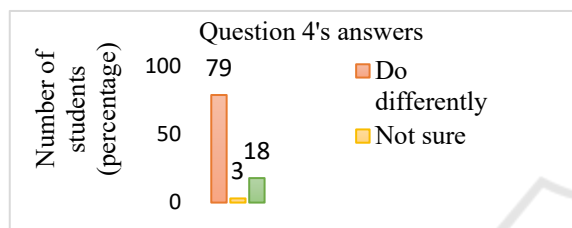


Figure 4: Students' answers on question 4 (in percentage).

Various answers have been gained for this question. 79% of the participants would do differently if they were assigned as a lecturer and only 3% are not sure of what they would do. In general, they would do field study for the course so real examples in the society can be shown directly to the students. They would also assign their students to explore several areas in Indonesia and the project would be of their travelling experience. Various activities can be done for this course, e.g. visiting museums or other places in the town, combining field study and presentation in the classroom, and creating a cultural event. However, 18% of them consider that they would do the same with the lecturers.

Question 5: *How do you think we should use technology/the internet in the course?* The students' answers to this question can be examined in the following figure.

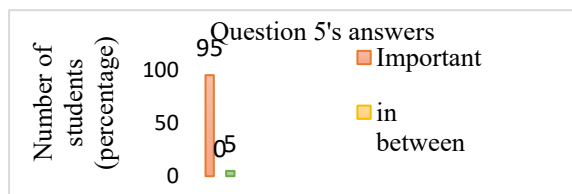


Figure 5: Students' answers on question 5 (in percentage).

This is an open-ended question, so the students should provide more than one-word answer.

95% of the participants consider that the use of technology or the internet is required for this course. They need internet to find more information which is not discussed in the textbook or in the classroom. The information in the internet helps them understand more. The internet also helps them do the assignment/project. Only 5% of the participants believe that internet is not truly important since not all sources and information from the internet are reliable. To make use of the internet, they should use it wisely.

Question 6: *What/who has helped you a lot in the learning process and the completion of the project of the course? (lecturer ----- technology) Provide reason.*

Figure 6 portrays students' answers to this question.

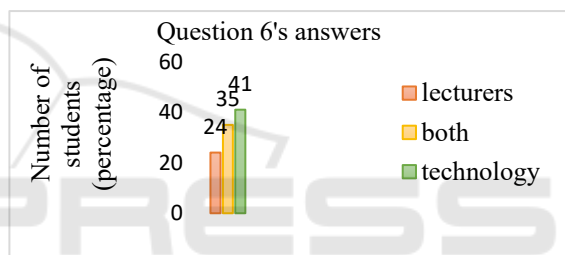


Figure 6: Students' answers on question 6 (in percentage).

Surprisingly, 41% of the participants consider that the technology has helped them more in the learning process compared to the lecturers. They believe that the internet provides more insights and much more information than the lecturers, while textbooks are limited. It also helps them complete the course assignment or project. On the other hand, 24% of the participants feel sure that the presence of the lecturers in the classroom is needed because they are more understandable and have wide knowledge and insights. This group of the participants considers that they better learn directly from the lecturer since they have many experiences. Additionally, because not all sources from the internet are reliable so the presence of the lecturers is still required. Meanwhile, 35% of the participants think that they need both lecturers and technology for this course. It means that both lecturers and technology play similarly important roles in this case. They consider that the lecturer in the classroom provides big picture of the course, while the internet helps them on the more detailed information. When the two last results (24% and 35%) are combined, there will be 59%

participants who believe that the presence of the lecturers in the classroom, to some extent, is needed.

Wardhani, L. S. (2016) 'Local Language in Globalization Era: Can It Survive?', in *ICON LATERALS*. Malang: Universitas Brawijaya Malang, pp. 417-424. doi: 10.217716/ub.icon.

4 CONCLUSIONS

There are three main points that this study has generally found. First, most of the participants consider that the Indonesian language, culture, and society course is important. They need to learn and understand their own country's language and culture before they learn foreign languages and cultures, thus, they can promote Indonesia to other countries. Second, the study finds that the presence and role of the lecturers in the classrooms are still needed since the students can directly learn and gain knowledge from the experienced ones. Third, the use of technology (internet) for the learning process is indeed essential as nearly all the participants believe it is important to help them gain more information and knowledge. The interesting one of the findings is that more than half of the participants believe that the presence of the lecturers are still needed even though the students can obtain much information from the internet.

The significance of the findings on the teaching and learning process is that the course of Indonesian language and culture is still required for Indonesian students in college level. The lecturer is required to enrich and widen her/his knowledge so that the students can learn more from her/him. In addition, the learning process can be held by applying multimodal approach, i.e. combining classroom presentation, field study, and use of technology – internet. Therefore, it implies that the course of Indonesian language and culture requires a lecturer who is internet literate and able to use some different modes for teaching and learning activities.

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