

INDEPENDENT STUDY FOR IMPROVING ENGLISH SKILLS OF NON-ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the analysis of an independent study in improving English proficiency of students of non-English Department in FKIP University of Pasir Pangaraian on the basis of a recent study. The aspects explored in the study covered activities done by the students in their independent study and their proficiency. Generally, independent study can be conducted anywhere and at anytime by using any supporting sources such as language laboratory, library and Self Access centre. The research employed the descriptive qualitative design and the instruments used in collecting the data were a set of questionnaire and tests. The data analysis covered preparation and data implementation. The findings showed that the activities of independent study done by non-English department students were reading English newspapers and magazines, listening to the radio especially English programmes, watching videos, and making use of language laboratory, library, self access centre. The finding also provided the evidence that the students' English proficiency showed significant improvement.

Keywords: independent study, English proficiency, non-English department students

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory subject from junior high school to higher education. At higher education, English is treated as the first foreign language and the most important language that should be mastered particularly by English students for spoken communication and for reading in order to understand the written English literature.

When lecturers want to have more motivated students, they should know what the students want to learn and how they want to learn it. According to

Silberman (2007), the enjoyment of one's work and pride in his accomplishments are important factors in increasing his motivation. Someone may enjoy and learn his work if he is interested in it. He can select the materials and topics that are meaningful to him and directly find how he wants to learn it. Independent study encourages learners' to participate in selecting the materials, mode of working and assessment so that they have a choice and self-expression in learning English

outside the regular program in the classroom.

Independent study is an independent learning which is conducted by the students out of their study hours in the college in order to get more supporting and comfortable situations in order to understand the learning materials. In this case, independent study is one of the factors that can promote the students' English mastery. Based on the above description, the researcher was interested in analyzing the independent study activities which were done by the sixth semester students of the English study program, University of Pasir Pengaraian (UPP) in English learning.

Practically and theoretically, this research was expected to be able not only to provide significant contributions to the sixth semester students of the English study program for them to get information about the independent study which is useful to improve their English skills, but also can be useful for the lecturers especially those who teach English at the English study program, FKIP UPP, aiming at reviewing appropriate strategies used in teaching English to their students in order to find various ways for students to learn the language.

Students need a variety of English learning environment where they can use the language. In fact, because of the limitation of media and materials in the classroom, students go outside to get related resources by which they are more motivated to learn and practice the language for they are not provided with enough chances to practice their English in the classroom.

Sandra (2008) defines that independent study is a system that gives the opportunity to the learners to learn something independently by using printed and tape recorded learning materials that have been prepared

previously. The term independent strictly means that the control of time and place in learning is fully arranged by the learners.

Sandra (ibid) views that there are two types of independent study; namely, required activity and Enjoyment. Required activity is an activity that must be followed by the students. This activity can be conducted for one hundred minutes every week for one semester that has been listed in the lecturing schedule. Such activities cover listening, reading, vocabulary, speaking and writing. In listening, students are asked to watch certain movies and write a report by using a movie analysis form or it can be done by the enjoyment tasks where students are allowed to choose their favorite movie titles, but they still have to make a report by using the movie analysis form.

Enjoyment activity is a fun activity that can be done by the students in their free time (out of study hours) in the following venues:

- a. In a reading room where students read for enjoyment. They are allowed to choose reading activities such as children reading books, novels, magazines, journals, clips from newspaper articles, and the like.
- b. In a computer room where an activity can be done by the students such as learning grammar interactively and playing games.
- c. In a video room where the students can watch VCD. Through this activity they are able to learn and listen to correct English pronunciation uttered by the native speakers). In this room they are also able to watch various movies with the help of an assistant.

d. In Speaking Corner where the students can play games or have

English conversations.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applied a qualitative approach that described variables objectively. The collected data were analyzed systematically. This research also tried to describe the facts related to the independent study activities in learning English. The data were gathered by using questionnaire, interview, and documentation. The questionnaire was used to get the information about the implementation of independent study activities. The questionnaire data were analyzed by

using a percentage analysis which was formulated in three steps; that is, preparation, tabulation and data implementation. Firstly, the preparation was made by checking respondents' identification and their data. After that tabulation was made through data classification based on the instrument used in the test. Then, data were entered to the frequency table and were scored based on the frequency of correct answers. The results of the analysis were used to describe the variables.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

After distributing the questionnaire, the data were processed and transferred into percentages. The distribution of the questionnaire was intended to know the percentage of students who did independent study activities. To analyze the student's independent study

activities the manual calculation was employed. After the level was obtained, the number of level was counted. The researcher also counted the total number of the total level. The description of data can be seen in the table below:

1. Students' Frequency in Reading English Materials and Newspapers outside the Classroom

Reading English and Newspaper	F	%
Often	8	17,8
Sometimes	11	24,4
Rarely	26	57,8
Total	45	100

Table 1. Students' Frequency in Reading English Materials and Newspapers outside the Classroom

The above table shows that 8 students are in *often* frequency level, 11 students are in *sometimes* frequency level and 26 students are in *rarely* frequency level.

The results of the data analysis indicated that the frequency of the students' reading English magazines and newspapers was in *never* level.

2. The Results of Students' Frequency in Listening to the Radio English Program through Radio

Listening to the Radio English Program	F	%
Often	25	55,6
Sometimes	9	20
Rarely	11	24,4
Total	45	100

Table 2. Students' Frequency in Listening to the Radio English Program

Table 2 presents that 25 students are in *often* frequency level, 9 students are in *sometimes* frequency level and 11 students are in *rarely* frequency level.

The data analysis provided the evidence that the frequency of students' listening to the radio English Program was in *often* level.

3. Students' Frequency in Watching an English TV Program

Watching an English TV Program	F	%
Often	5	11,1
Sometimes	30	66,7
Rarely	10	22,2
Total	45	100

Table 3. Students' Frequency in Watching an English TV Program

Table 3 demonstrates that 5 students are in *often* frequency level, 30 students are in *sometimes* frequency level, and 10 students are in *rarely*

frequency level. It means that the students' frequency in watching an English TV Program was in *sometimes* level.

4. Students' Frequency in Practicing English

Practicing English	F	%
Often	5	11,1
Sometimes	9	20
Rarey	31	68,9
Total	45	100

Table 4. Students' Frequency in Practicing English

The above table above shows that 5 students are in *often* frequency level, 9 students are in *sometimes* frequency level and 31 students are in *rarely* frequency level. Based on the data analysis, it was obvious that the

students' frequency in practicing English was in *rarely* level.

5. Students' Frequency in Using English Laboratory

Using English Laboratory	F	%
Often	0	0
Sometimes	32	71,1
Rarely	13	28,9
Total	45	100

Table 5. Students' Frequency in Using English Laboratory

Based on the table above, it is clear that 0 (none of the students is in *often* frequency level, 32 students are in *sometimes* frequency level and 13

students are in *rarely* frequency level. It means that the students' frequency in using English Laboratory was in *sometimes* level.

6. Students' Frequency in Using English Literature in Library

Using English Literature in Library	F	%
Often	6	13,3
Sometimes	39	86,7
Rarely	0	0
Total	45	100

Table 6. Students' Frequency in Using English Literature in Library

Table 6 displays that 6 students are in *often* frequency level, 39 students are in *sometimes* frequency level and none of the students is in *rarely* frequency

level, meaning that the students' frequency in Using English Literature in Library was in *sometimes* level

7. Students' Frequency in Using Self Access Centre (SAC)

Using Self Access Centre (SAC)	F	%
Often	7	15,6
Sometimes	34	75,6
Rarely	4	8,8
Total	45	100

Diagram 7. Students' Frequency in Using Self Access Centre (SAC)

Table 7 indicates that 7 students are in *often* frequency level, 34 students are in *sometimes* frequency level and 4 students are in *rarely* frequency level,

meaning that the students' frequency in using Self Access Centre (SAC) was in *sometimes* level.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, some conclusions can be drawn as in the following:

Independent Study can generally be conducted at any place where supporting sources are available such as language laboratory, library, Radio/TV and self-access centre. Besides, independent study can benefit students in many ways and gives them a degree of freedom, responsibility and obligation to plan and to conduct their learning activities. Also, students can get advice from their lecturer or someone else; however, it does not mean that they have to be dependent to them. Furthermore, independent study can give the opportunity to the students to learn something independently through printed and taped recorded learning materials that have been prepared beforehand. The term 'independent study' means that the students can arrange time and decide places where they feel at ease to study. On the basis of the results of the analysis, non-English department students of University of Pasir Pengaraian (UPP) could improve their speaking skill even though they did not have adequate materials like English Students have. Nevertheless, they could enlarge their knowledge from other sources.

Suggestion

Based on the conclusions, some suggestions are given as follows:

1. For students, learning English means not only building the theoretical knowledge in the class hours, but also requiring practice and review of lessons out of the class hours in other places. So, the students need to be provided with more motivation, information, and new situations.
2. It is important for English teachers or lecturers to be good models for their students. They should allow the students to have more time to learn independently and use their English out of class hours at appropriate places where they feel motivated to learn various materials and practice using English with friends and other people.
3. This research is expected to give contributions and new ideas to the English Study Program that focus on English teaching at the University of Pasir Pengaraian to prepare the students be good at English. Therefore, the English Study Program through English lecturers keep encouraging the non-English major students to be active in using the language not only in the class hours but also in other environments where they can study independently, being active, creative, innovative and responsible for what they have learned.

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