



The Opinion Of Students Toward The Importance Of English Language Learning As An Obligatory Subject In The Social Welfare Science Class At Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang

Sherly Desliyanah

STISIPOL Candradimuka Palembang

Jalan Swadaya Sekip Ujung Palembang

Email : sherly_desliyanah@stisipolcandradimuka.ac.id

Abstract: *This study was conducted to know the opinion of students towards the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the social welfare science class at Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang. The qualitative survey research method was applied with 50 respondents who came from Social welfare science class in Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang. The research study result showed 84% of the respondents stated that learning English helps them to get more opportunities to get a better job after graduation. Meanwhile, 94% of the respondents stated that 'listening, speaking, reading, writing' are all important in learning English. The study result showed that English language learning as a compulsory subject in the class of social welfare science is important.*

Keywords: *English Language Learning, Importance of English Language, Obligatory Subject*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui pendapat mahasiswa terhadap pentingnya pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai mata pelajaran wajib pada kelas ilmu kesejahteraan sosial di Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang. Metode penelitian survei kualitatif diterapkan pada 50 responden yang berasal dari kelas Ilmu Kesejahteraan Sosial di Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang. Hasil studi penelitian menunjukkan 84% responden menyatakan bahwa belajar bahasa Inggris membantu mereka mendapatkan lebih banyak kesempatan untuk mendapatkan pekerjaan yang lebih baik setelah lulus. Sementara itu, 94% responden menyatakan bahwa 'mendengarkan, berbicara, membaca, menulis' semuanya penting dalam belajar bahasa Inggris. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai mata pelajaran wajib di kelas ilmu kesejahteraan sosial adalah penting.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Pentingnya Bahasa Inggris, Mata Pelajaran Wajib

INTRODUCTION

Every country in the world has put Education as one of the most important parts to create a good next generation. A good education will put that country in a good position, too. It is because the benefits and its functions are many and with proper support from the government, it could just reach every nook and corner. Every country has their own education system. As cited in the blog page of Indiansindonesia (2023), it was stated that Indonesia's education system is highly reflected as well as inspired by the Dutch colonization. In addition, the data from the blog page also stated that the compulsory education program in Indonesia started from the Presidential Instruction Decree No. 10 of 1973, and by 1984, where the government of Indonesia had fully carried out the six-year compulsory education program for primary school-aged students (7-12 years). The effects of this new strategy was superb, it showed that the primary school participation increased to 92 percent in 1993, up from 79 percent just ten years before. According to that data, it could be concluded that education has a great importance function in supporting the growth of that country.

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* Sherly Desliyanah, sherly_desliyanah@stisipolcandradimuka.ac.id

In relation to that data, it was stated at Scholaro Database (2023) the Ministry of Education of Indonesia stated that in Indonesia education is centrally controlled by the ministry of national education. It was stated that compulsory education should be 6 years in primary school and 3 years in junior high school. Furthermore, in relation to the data cited in the Indiansinonesia blog page (2023), the system of education in Indonesia was divided into some different types. They are primary education, secondary education, vocational education, special education, and tertiary education. Based on the Article 39, Clause 3, Law No. 2/1989, and Article 14, Clause 2, Government Regulation No. 28 of 1990, as well as the Ministry of Curriculum and Culture's regulation No. 060/U/1993 of February 25, 1993, all specify the education program for primary schools. Where Primary education is obligatory for 6 years and junior high school for 3 years. It could be done after graduating from pre-school playgroups, which may begin in a child's third year, the primary phase begins, even though this was an optional. Additionally, the majority of primary schools are executed by the government. As a proof, it could be seen that some institutions offered some accelerated programs which can decrease the phase time of study duration. Meanwhile, a transition between the slower pace of elementary school and the challenges was provided in junior high school which may await in senior high school.

According to Brown (2007) there were some factors that prevent students from mastering the English language since learning another language is seen as a complex process with some variables. In addition, Chitravelu & Sithamparam & Choon (2005) claimed that English proficiency opens the door for bigger opportunities. They revealed that most people who have good English skills would have a better job. Being familiar with English would lead us to stay on a line of the most recent advancements in science, academics, and technology because most of these publications are drawn up in English. Widiyanto et al (2020) also stated that 75% of scientific literature is published in English, any researcher or expert who wants the most up-to-date knowledge or access to specific volumes must be fluent in English.

Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang is one of those Universities in Palembang which has implemented English as an obligatory subject in the classroom. English is an obligatory subject from the campus that should be taken by all the students from all study programs in the early semester. Based on the study result from Bahar (2021), the students at the university can hardly do any of those things. Most students find it hard to understand classroom instruction when it is being given in English because of the shortage of English ability. And the students are not comfortable with articles in English when they are required to express themselves in English. Some of these problems are faced by the students in terms of linguistic ability that

includes grammar, use of the article, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to examine students' opinion of learning English as an obligatory subject. Meanwhile, the data also revealed from the study result of Ahmed (2015) it was stated that most of the students showed more fear regarding classroom instructions in their learning experience.

Students who came from different study programs varied in attitudes towards English language learning in terms of domains of usage and focus of learning skills, which shows that a single curriculum or teaching methodology is not qualified. Based on this study result, many recommendations have been made related to the teaching methodology, curriculum, and teaching materials. Due to some results of the study above, the writer was interested in doing research about the opinion of students toward the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the social welfare science class at Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English Language Learning

There are many potential excuses to study a foreign language. This possibility could happen due to coercion from the established curriculum. Some people think learning English or another language will offer them more chances for the advancement of their future lives. They thought they would get a better job position if they could master two or more languages than if they just knew their own mother tongue. Since English has become the international language of communication, it has got a special position to learn.

The students have a need to learn English to hold out in the community. Harmer (2002) stated that there are many possible reasons for students to study a language. It could be seen that English for Special or Specific Purposes has been implemented in some situations where they need to have some specific reason to learn the language. English will be needed by some business executives for international trade. Waiters also might need to have English skills to serve their customers.

English language has been carried out as one of the obligatory subjects in the university in Indonesia. It could be interpreted that university students from every study program are obliged to have the English subject. This has been done in all universities as an effort to prepare them to deal with the challenges in the future. A research result from Bahar (2021) identified that in the university, students encountered some expectations regarding English such as 1) they should be able to present their subjects in English, 2) read articles written in English, 3) convey their thoughts, both spoken and written in English, etc.

Some students may find difficulties in understanding the classroom instruction when it is being delivered in English because of a shortcoming of English ability. In addition, it also made some students not enjoy articles in English when they needed to express themselves in English. Some students also deal with many problems in linguistic ability that includes grammar, use of the article, etc.

The Importance of English Language Learning

The preferable quality of jobs will be fit to students who have good English. Andayani (2022) stated that English competence will also assist the students to become more aboveboard to the rest of the world, as they will be able to introduce themselves to the world through this language. The skills are not only drawing on from formal education but also through exposure to a variety of languages, especially English.

There are many chances that would be available for any professional in the realm of business if you are eloquent in the language. The outcome of this could be seen that the universities are under insistence to prepare their students with the best possible preparation for careers in their chosen disciplines. The students at least should have good English, because it is regarded as the universal language of the world (Sari, 2019).

Syahputra (2014) also stated that there are many benefits of learning to speak, read, and write in English. The scholarships are available as a great way to foster international collaboration between countries and universities. And then, he also said that by having good English skill, the access to foreign research programs, international conferences, and other opportunities are available. Additionally, mastering English also could make the students able to find material in this language in the form of articles, publications, books, videos, courses, and more.

In addition, another supported research result also came from Ubaedillah et al (2020). They stated that most of the companies, and even the selection test of being a civil servant also required English proficiency in the employee resume. It could mean that learning English will allow us access to higher educational chances, and better work opportunities. No matter where you work, whether it's in the public sector or for a multinational corporation, you will meet language barriers.

In supporting those statements, it was known that the English language itself has been addressed as one of the obligatory subjects at the university level in Indonesia. It means that all students at the university from every major are obliged to take an English subject. This has been carried out in all universities as a means to prepare the students to face the future challenges. At the university level, students deal with some outlooks regarding English such as

1) they should be able to present their courses in English, 2) they should be able to read articles drawn up in English on their course, 3) they should be able to show their idea both in spoken and in written form in English, etc.

Obligatory Subject

The Curriculum in Indonesia puts English as an obligatory subject which should be taught starting from junior high school until senior high school. Meanwhile, English becomes an optional subject to be taught in Elementary school. English became the first experience for almost all students of junior high school in Indonesia. This is because English language teaching has not become an obligatory or compulsory subject before. According to Hawanti (2015) English in Indonesian primary schools is currently an optional subject that is offered as one of the local content subjects provided in the primary school program. In Addition, in Indonesia teaching English is still done by applying the genre-based learning approach. It meant that the approach was chosen because this is expected to improve students' English skills through communication in various contexts both oral and written. According to the data cited from the Ministry of Education (2016) in Mubarok et.al (2020) the English competences in junior high school referred to communication competence in three types of discourses; interpersonal, transactional, and functional either orally or written. Therefore, in this approach, the function of language and its use become a unity value both oral and written.

The teaching of English has become an obligatory subject in Indonesia for junior high school level, this situation forced teachers to expand their competence in teaching English. They ought to be able to organize the lesson plans, students' worksheet, appliance of assessment, and attractive media for teaching. Since English is still taught as foreign language in Indonesia, it makes less opportunity for students to practice English in daily conversation. A supported statement came from the study result of Mubarok et.al (2022) where it was found that there were the unpreparedness of teachers, who can become the implementers of the activities in class teaching, in the aspect of lesson plan, the implementation of the plan, and assessment. Additionally, to support that statement, another research result found by Widagsa et.al (2023), showed that English can become an investment for the future, if it could be done sooner, it would be better. The research result also suggested teachers to identify the suitability of *EFL* teachers and improve *ELT* policy at the primary level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, the researcher used qualitative survey methods to make it easier to describe the opinion of students toward the importance of English language learning as an

obligatory subject in the social welfare science class at Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang. Creswell (2012) stated that the survey research design is conducted as a step in implementing qualitative research where the writer administered a sample or the entire of the involved population of people to give explanation about the behaviors, opinions, characteristics, or opinion of the population. Additionally, Jackson (2012) also stated that the gist of the survey method can be explained as questioning individuals on a topic or topics and then describing their responses, by survey research design, researchers will come to know about the reaction or response of those samples or populations toward their research. Meanwhile, Samsu (2017) also supported by saying that the survey method itself is a kind of research method that uses a questionnaire as the main instrument for collecting data in the field.

After gaining the information about the survey research method, the writer applied those methods as the way to find the opinion of students toward the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the social welfare science class at Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang. In this study, the researcher used Google forms as the technique of collecting the data. The researcher sent the form link of the questionnaire to the class leader, then it was forwarded to the class WhatsApp group, and the students filled in the form. While waiting for the students' responses about the questionnaire, the researcher conducted an interview directly with students by recording students' perceptions using the researcher's smartphone. These activities were conducted in the beginning of semester, since the class itself was taught by the researcher. There were 50 participants taken as the sample of this study. Those 50 students were coming from the third semester of social welfare science in Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang.

The participants were given a questionnaire that consisted of several statements about their perceptions toward the importance of learning English as a compulsory subject in the social welfare science class. They were asked about their agreement and perceptions whether they agree, strongly agree, disagree, or strongly disagree about each statement. In sorting the questionnaires, the writer used the Likert scale.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

FINDING

The opinion of students toward the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the social welfare science class were being examined through this research. The questionnaire was successfully given to the students to find the opinion of students toward the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the

class of social welfare in Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang. The questionnaire consisted of 19 questions in which were projecting Students' opinion toward the importance of learning English as an obligatory subject. The questionnaire items were adapted from the research questionnaire which was conducted by *Shammem Ahmed in 2015 with the research title Attitudes towards English language learning among EFL learners at UMSKAL*. The questionnaire consisted of 19 multiple - choice questions. They were divided into some different sections. The measurements of students' attitude towards the use of English were set in the first five questions. The answers would range from 1 to 5. 1 was counted as a strongly agreed answer and 5 as a strongly disagreed answer. Meanwhile, the measurements of students' preferences of teaching methodology were started from questions from number 6 to 9. These questions were arranged in a circumstantial way, but it could read students' preference for a particular methodology. As could be seen later, in the question numbers 10, 11, and 12 would deal with students' focus on language skills in the teaching curriculum. Questions from number 13 to 19 are direct questions regarding the learners' choice of language skills.

Table 1
The Scoring of Questionnaire

The Statements	Score
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

As a way of responding to these scales items, the subjects represent whether they agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement. Furthermore, the degree of agreement with the individual statements is valued numerically. The score of the subject is valued by summing the value assigned to individual responses.

Biographical Information

There were 50 students participating in this research. They all came from one class where the researcher taught English, it is social welfare science in Stisipol Candradimuka. There were 24 female students and 26 male. 25 students were coming from Pangkalan Balai, Banyuasin regency. 10 students were coming from Indralaya, Ogan Ilir regency. 10 students were coming from Merah mata, Banyuasin Regency. And 5 students were from Palembang.

The Opinion of Students towards the Use of English as an Obligatory Subject

The opinion of students towards the importance of English language learning as a obligatory subject in the class of social welfare science in Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang was assessed by applying a Likert scale type of questionnaire where each question showed the level of agreement and disagreement.

Table 2

The Opinion of Student towards importance of English language learning as an Obligatory Subject

No	Item Description	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	DA (2)	SDA (1)
1	It will help the growth of your mind by learning English !	21%	52%	27%		
2	It will improve your personality by learning English !	10%	63%	21%	6%	
3	It will open more job opportunities for you by learning English!	42%	42%	16%		
4	It will help you in higher academic achievement by learning English!	42%	52%	6%		
5	It will help you promote business by learning English!	21%	63%	16%		

Based on the questionnaire given, it could be seen that 52% of the respondents shown positive response that it will help the growth of their mind by learning English, and 21% also stated strongly agree that learning English will help them growth their mind, meanwhile 27% respondents shown neutral, so it could be concluded that none of respondents shown negative response toward this question item. Additionally, 63% and 10% of the respondents showed a positive response that it will improve their personality by learning English, and 21% respondents were in a neutral position and only 6% of respondents stated that learning English will not improve their personality. 42% respondents strongly agree and 42% of respondents also stated that learning English will open more job opportunities for them. And 16% of them were in neutral responses. 52% respondents agree and 42% respondents strongly agree that learning English will help them in a higher academic achievement. And 6% were in neutral response. In the last question about the opinion of students toward the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the classroom, 63% respondents and 21% respondents showed a positive response that learning English will help them in promoting business. And 16% of respondents were giving neutral responses. Due to this result, it could

be concluded that English language learning is important to be learned as an obligatory subject in the classroom.

Students' Preferences of Teaching Methodology

In gaining better data to support the research result, the students' preference of teaching methodology was also asked to the respondents. It could be seen through the table below.

Table 3
Students' Preferences of Teaching Methodology

No	Item Description	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	DA (2)	SDA (1)
6	Being able to exactly communicate with the foreigners in English is very basic purpose of English	10%	80%	10%		
7	You like to study English through "grammatical rules and vocabulary memorisation"	31%	21%	10%	38%	
8	When you speak English the fear of making grammatical mistakes has great influence on you	31%	63%	6%		
9	You like to study English in an all English environment	4%	9%	42%	42%	3%

80% of respondents and 10% of respondents stated that being able to communicate with foreigners in English is the basic purpose of English. Meanwhile 31% respondents strongly agree and 21% respondents agree about learning English through grammatical rules and vocabulary memorisation. 10% were in neutral response and 38% respondents stated that they disagree about learning English through grammatical rules and vocabulary memorisation. Additionally, 63% of respondents agree and 31% strongly agree that the fear of making grammatical mistakes has a great influence on them when they speak English. 42% of respondents gave a neutral response about learning English in an all English environment, and 42% respondents disagree about that statement and 9% agree and 4% strongly agree. Based on this result, it could be seen that students' preference on teaching methodology still focused on learning grammar and vocabulary memorisation. It could be understood since English is not a second language in Indonesia. And it was supported that more than 80% of the students were not coming from Palembang. They were coming from some villages in south sumatera where English was taught as a subject with more grammar and vocabulary memorisation.

Students' Focus on Language Skill in the Teaching Curriculum

Another support data to know the opinion of students towards the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the social welfare science class in Stisipol

Candradimuka Palembang, the question items about students' focus on language skills in the teaching curriculum was also given to the respondents. The data could be seen in the table below.

Table 4
Students' Focus on Language Skills in the Teaching Curriculum

No	Item Description	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	DA (2)	SDA (1)
10	I like listening to and understanding everyday English	8%	63%	21%	4%	4%
11	I think English is enough just to read	6%	31%	21%	42%	
12	I think those four language skills 'listening, speaking, reading, writing' are all important to study	31%	63%	6%		

The data from the table showed that 63% respondents agree and 8% strongly agree that more availability of listening to and understanding everyday English. 21% showed a neutral response and 4% disagree and 4% strongly disagree. Additionally, 42% of respondents showed that it was not enough to be able to read in English. And 31% agreed and 6% totally agreed that it was enough to be able to read in English. 63% respondents agree and 31% strongly agree that Listening, speaking, reading and writing are all important in learning English. From these questionnaire items, it could be concluded that students needed to have all those four skills of English language learning.

Open-Ended Questions' Responses

In fulfilling the research result of this study, an open ended question was also given to the participants. There were seven items of questions given. Question number 13 (Did learning English at your school or college give you any fear or unpleasant feelings?) and 14 (If, Yes or some, the source (s) of the fear was/were were set to identify students' problems in their past learning experience.

Due to the result of the open-ended question section, from 50 students, 40 students stated that they have got fear and unpleasant experiences of learning English during their school period. 10 students said that they could enjoy their English language learning during their school period. Those 40 students who got fear and unpleasant experiences during English language learning stated that the main source of the fear was about the teaching method itself. Focusing on too much grammar and vocabulary memorisation made the students not enjoy their English language learning. Another source of the unpleasant experience was also because there was less practice of English speaking, so the students did not get more time to practice

their English. They just focused on understanding grammatical material, memorizing vocabulary but did not get more chances or opportunity to apply English as a means of communication.

In addition, the questions from 15 to 19 were set to know the students' choice of learning skills. From the result of the questionnaire in this part, the researcher got more information about students' choice of learning skills. As a result, it was found that none of the students chose one of those four skills of learning. They did not give any of those choices, because they stated that they need all those four skills of learning to get better at English language learning.

Table 5
Students' Choice of Learning Skills

No	Item Description
15	I want to focus on 'listening' only in English learning
16	I want to focus on 'reading' only in English learning
17	I want to focus on 'writing' only in English learning
18	I want to focus on 'speaking' only in English learning
19	If you have to choose the most important skills based on your favorite skills, what do you think is the sequence?

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicated the opinion of students towards the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the social science welfare class at Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang. The data showed that 52% of the respondents stated that English language learning will help the growth of their mind, and 21% also strongly agree that learning English will help them grow their mind, meanwhile 27% respondents showed neutrality. Additionally, 63% and 10% of the respondents stated that learning English will improve their personality, and respondents also stated that learning English will open more job opportunities for them. 52% respondents agree and 42% respondents strongly agree that learning English will help them in a higher academic achievement. In the last question about the opinion of students toward the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the classroom, 63% respondents and 21% respondents showed a positive response that learning English will help them in promoting business. And 16% of respondents were giving neutral responses. Due to this result, it could be summarized that English language learning is important to be learned as an obligatory subject in the classroom.

In finding students' preferences of teaching methodology in the classroom. The result showed that 80% of respondents stated that being able to communicate with foreigners in English is the basic purpose of English. Meanwhile 31% respondents strongly agree and 21% respondents agree about learning English through grammatical rules and vocabulary memorisation. 38% respondents stated that they disagree about learning English through grammatical rules and vocabulary memorisation. Additionally, 63% of respondents agree and 31% strongly agree that the fear of making grammatical mistakes has a great influence on them when they speak English. 42% of respondents gave a neutral response about learning English in an all English environment, and 42% respondents disagree about that statement and 9% agree and 4% strongly agree. Based on this result, it could be seen that students' preference on teaching methodology still focused on learning grammar and vocabulary memorisation. And it was supported that more than 80% of the students were not coming from Palembang. They were coming from some villages in south sumatera where English was taught as a subject with more grammar and vocabulary memorisation.

To complete the data, the students' focus on language skills in the teaching curriculum was also assessed. The result showed that 63% of respondents agree and 8% strongly agree that more availability of listening to and understanding everyday English. Additionally, 42% of respondents showed that it was not enough to be able to read in English. 63% respondents agree and 31% strongly agree that Listening, speaking, reading and writing are all important in learning English. Due to those results, It could be seen that students need to have all those four skills of English language learning.

The open-ended question was given as the final completion. The result showed that 40 students stated that they were afraid and got unpleasant experiences of learning English during their school period. 10 students said that they could enjoy their English language learning during their school period. Those 40 students stated that the main source of the fear was about the teaching method itself. Too much grammar and vocabulary memorisation made the students not enjoy their English language learning. Additionally, the unpleasant experience came from the less English speaking practice, it made the students get little time to practice their English. They were just forced to understand grammatical material, memorizing vocabulary with no chance for applying English as a means of communication.

As the final data completion, questions about knowing the students' choice of learning skills were set, too. From the result of the questionnaire in this part, it was found that none of the students chose one of those four skills of learning, since they need all those four skills of learning to get better at English language learning.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research is to know the opinion of students towards the importance of English language learning as an obligatory subject in the social welfare science class in Stisipol Candradimuka Palembang. After analyzing the questionnaire items, it could be seen that students' perception toward the importance of English language learning showed a positive perception. It was proved that 73% of the respondents stated that learning English would improve their personality. And 84% of the respondents stated that learning English would give them more opportunities to get a better job after graduation. Knowing the English language is very important to university students, it could help them to prepare themselves to have better networking to get better job opportunities later after graduation.

As the supported statement to give more proof of students' perception towards the importance of English language learning as a compulsory subject in the university level, the teaching methodology should be improved too. The process of English language learning could be done in some attractive ways, it does not only focus on grammatical order and vocabulary memorisation. When the students are served with some variations of learning method, it could help the students enjoy their English class. Those four skills of learning should be applied altogether, so the students will get them all, and they could enjoy their English class. The research result clearly showed that it is important to have English language learning as a compulsory subject at university level. And It should become the duty of the planners and policy makers to come up with viable and learner sensitive curriculum, teaching materials and methods.

It will become the job of the teacher to set goals and tasks that could help their students be successful after finishing their class. Creating creative ways of teaching, giving motivation on the importance of English learning could strengthen students' good perception towards the English language learning in the classroom. Even though the students' success or failure is in their own hands, the teacher can become a good influencer to light up the course of events in the students' favor. The teacher of English language learning has got a very big role to play here.

It could be seen from the attitude of class participation, their conscientiousness, their sense of humor and their seriousness in the process of transferring knowledge that might influence their students. Finally, it could be concluded that students strongly agree to have English language learning as a compulsory subject in the classroom, moreover if the teacher

could support them by making English language learning itself could be easy to understand and apply.

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