

EFL STUDENTS' JOURNEY IN NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL CREDIT TRANSFER PROGRAM IN TAIWAN

SKRIPSI



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JULY 2024



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Presented to

Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
Universitas Islam Malang

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Sarjana in English Language Education

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JULY 2024



ABSTRAK

Safitri, Alfi Husna. 2024. Perjalanan Siswa EFL di Negara yang Tidak Berbahasa Inggris: Studi Kasus Program Transfer Kredit Internasional di Taiwan. Skripsi, Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Islam Malang. Pembimbing I: Henny Rahmawati, S.Pd., S.S., M.Pd; Pembimbing II: Dr. Durotun Nasihah, S.S., M.A.

Key words: Pelajar EFL, Negara yang Tidak Berbahasa Inggris, Lingkungan Asing

Dalam menerapkan strategi untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris melalui program pertukaran pelajar internasional, para siswa ditempatkan dalam lingkungan di mana bahasa target digunakan secara luas. Mereka dikelilingi oleh bahasa target dalam berbagai situasi, termasuk lingkungan sekolah dan aktivitas sehari-hari. Pendekatan ini menekankan penggunaan bahasa target sebagai sarana utama komunikasi, dengan sedikit atau tanpa penggunaan bahasa asli. Paparan bahasa yang berkelanjutan yang diterima siswa melalui tugas, aktivitas, dan berbagai acara ekstrakurikuler cenderung lebih berhasil karena keterlibatan aktif dari setiap siswa.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman dan persepsi siswa EFL (English as a Foreign Language) saat belajar di negara yang tidak berbahasa Inggris ketika berpartisipasi dalam program transfer kredit internasional di Taiwan, serta manfaat dan hambatan yang dihadapi. Dengan memahami hubungan ini, kita dapat mendapatkan wawasan tentang bagaimana pembelajaran bahasa melalui program transfer kredit internasional di negara yang tidak berbahasa Inggris dapat berkontribusi pada peningkatan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris di kalangan pelajar EFL. Dalam proses pengumpulan data, peneliti menggunakan wawancara semi-terstruktur yang disesuaikan dengan pengalaman peserta untuk mencapai tujuan dan maksud penelitian. Untuk analisis data, peneliti menggunakan analisis tematik.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan persepsi pelajar EFL tentang belajar bahasa Inggris di negara yang tidak berbahasa Inggris yang dibagi menjadi tiga tema diskusi, termasuk tantangan yang dihadapi oleh pelajar EFL, peran lingkungan asing dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa, dan pengaruhnya terhadap kemampuan bahasa Inggris pelajar EFL. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pelajar EFL menghadapi tantangan saat pertama kali tiba di Taiwan karena perbedaan budaya yang mempengaruhi aksen pengucapan bahasa Inggris. Namun, lingkungan asing di sekitar mereka berfungsi sebagai faktor pendukung yang memotivasi pelajar EFL untuk meningkatkan keterampilan bahasa Inggris mereka. Studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa tiga pelajar EFL mengalami peningkatan kemampuan bahasa



Inggris mereka setelah mengikuti program transfer kredit internasional selama satu semester di Taiwan.

Berdasarkan temuan ini, diharapkan dapat memberikan wawasan berharga bagi lembaga pendidikan dan instruktur bahasa dalam merancang program untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini juga harus menjadi pertimbangan dalam merancang kurikulum yang tepat dan efektif serta menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif di lembaga pendidikan lokal. Selain itu, penelitian ini dapat menjadi pertimbangan penting bagi siswa dalam memilih dan berpartisipasi dalam program serupa, memungkinkan mereka untuk memaksimalkan manfaat belajar bahasa Inggris di negara yang tidak berbahasa Inggris. Lebih lanjut, metode penelitian yang berbeda dapat digunakan untuk mendapatkan wawasan yang lebih mendetail tentang manfaat belajar bahasa Inggris di negara yang tidak berbahasa Inggris dengan mengukur tingkat perkembangan kemampuan bahasa Inggris secara spesifik untuk penelitian di masa depan.





ABSTRACT

Safitri, Alfi Husna. 2024. EFL Students Journey in Non-English Speaking
Country: A Case Study of International Credit Transfer Program in
Taiwan. Skripsi, English Education Department Faculty of Teacher
Training and Education Islamic University of Malang. Advisor I: Henny
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Key words: EFL Students, Non-English Speaking Country, Foreign Environment

In implementing strategies to enhance English proficiency through the international student exchange program, students are surrounded by the target language in various settings, including the school environment and daily activities. This approach emphasizes using the target language as the primary means of communication, with little or no use of the native language. The continuous language exposure students receive through assignments, activities, and various extracurricular events tends to be more successful due to active engagement from each student.

This research aims to explore EFL students' experiences and perceptions while studying in a non-English speaking country when participating in the international credit transfer program in Taiwan, along with the benefits and obstacles encountered. In the process of data collecting, the researcher used semi-structured interviews with participants' experiences tailored to the writer's intent and purpose in conducting research. For data analysis, the researcher used thematic analysis.

The findings of the study indicate that EFL students face challenges upon their initial arrival in Taiwan due to cultural differences that affect the English pronunciation accent. However, the foreign environment around them serves as a supportive factor that motivates EFL students to improve their English language skills. This study also shows that the three EFL students experienced an improvement in their English language proficiency after participating in the international credit transfer program for one semester in Taiwan.

Based on the findings, it is expected to provide valuable insights for educational institutions and language instructors in designing programs to enhance English language proficiency. Additionally, this research can be an important consideration for students in choosing and participating in similar programs, allowing them to maximize the benefits of learning English in non-English speaking countries. Furthermore, different research methods can be utilized to gain more detailed insights into the benefits of learning English in non-English speaking country by measuring the specific levels of English language proficiency development for future research.



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the writer explained basic information about the research, referring to discussions related to the conditions and problems subject of research in this study which includes history, theory, and several results from previous research.

1.1 Background of the Study

As one of the international languages with a significant role and high demand, EFL learners and educational institutions implement various strategies to provide instruction and enhance proficiency in English. Numerous English language learning programs are offered by different institutions, including language classes, English courses, language policies in specific environments, student exchange programs, and study abroad opportunities. The existence of an English-speaking proficiency enhancement program is important to implement so that students can use English productively (Kurniasih et al., 2019). Student exchange programs and studying abroad have benefits for students in English proficiency for participating students. In mastering a language, individuals can actively participate in classroom lessons or gain exposure to the target language (Alhadad et al., 2021). During the international student exchange program, students consistently communicate and write in English, providing more opportunities to practice and explore their proficiency (Suryanto et al., 2022). According to Susini and Ndruru

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(2021), learning occurs naturally and out of necessity; it must begin with a stimulus that encourages the learner to repeat what they have learned. The result of repetition is the formation of habits.

In line with Stephen Krashen's Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, language acquisition occurs naturally or unconsciously through real interaction between the learner and the environment using the target language (Nasuha, 2020). The formulation of the target language method is carried out and internalized unconsciously, similar to first language acquisition in children, which emphasizes conveying meaning rather than focusing on grammatical rules. Bahruddin and Febriani (2020) demonstrated that, according to Krashen's theory, a foreign language can be acquired similarly to a first language with the support of several factors, such as a language-rich environment and other language activities like language programs and daily conversations outside the classroom.

In implementing strategies to enhance English proficiency through the international student exchange program, students are immersed in an environment where the target language is prevalent. They are surrounded by the target language in various settings, including the school environment and daily activities. This approach emphasizes using the target language as the primary means of communication, with little or no use of the native language. The continuous language exposure students receive through assignments, activities, and various extracurricular events tends to be more successful due to active engagement from each student (Masitoh et al., 2023). This research indicated that language learning through the international student exchange program allows students to practice what they have learned. Direct experience with the target language in various

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communication contexts can accelerate understanding of correct pronunciation and vocabulary mastery. Practicing speaking in the target language daily can help students improve their speaking skills (Astuti et al., 2020). In speaking or communicating verbally, language plays an active role, where good use of language in communication can provide a good understanding in conveying messages (Nasih et al., 2019).

The most effective English learning occurs in countries where English is the primary language, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Studying English in these countries is considered the best method as it provides learners with an ideal learning context. Students will have native-speaker teachers and numerous opportunities to practice outside the classroom. In contrast, countries where English is a second language are considered less ideal for learning English due to limited access to authentic materials and a shortage of native English-speaking teachers. The least ideal context is when students learn English in non-English speaking countries, where English is considered a foreign language and is only taught in schools without being used in everyday conversation. This usually occurs when students study English in countries where English is regarded as a foreign language (Wirantaka & Mardiningrum, 2023).

In this research, the international student exchange program is not conducted in an English-speaking country or with native English speakers. Instead, the program takes place in a non-English speaking country, specifically through an international credit transfer program carried out for one semester in Taiwan. In these activities, English is used as the language of instruction in the classroom and for conversation with other students. However, outside the classroom, Mandarin,



the primary language of Taiwan, is still used for conversations with local people, many of whom do not speak English fluently. Additionally, when communicating with fellow Indonesian students, Indonesian is still used.

Several previous studies have examined the barriers EFL students face when participating in international student exchange programs in non-English speaking countries. Wirantaka and Mardiningrum (2023) highlighted the challenges faced by students who indirectly have to master two foreign languages, English and the local language, as tools for learning and communication. Additionally, their research identified obstacles such as issues related to the language used in instruction, cultural differences influencing learning approaches, and social relationships being complicated for students due to language disparities. Hibatullah (2019) revealed several English language learning problems faced by international EFL students in non-English speaking country. These students experienced difficulties in both receptive and productive language skills, lecturer resources, learning strategies, vocabulary, motivation, language exposure, and cultural adaptation.

Different from previous research which focused on the challenges faced by students in non-English speaking countries, this study focused more on the perceptions and benefits felt by students after learning a language in a non-English speaking country. Additionally, this study takes place in a different country with a different culture, and the programs attended have a different duration than previous studies. So, this research aims to explore EFL students' experiences and perceptions while studying in a non-English speaking country when participating in the international credit transfer program in Taiwan, along with the benefits and obstacles encountered. By understanding this relationship, we can gain insight into

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how language learning through the international credit transfer program in non-English native-speaker country can contribute to the enhancement in improving English proficiency among EFL learners.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background study, the researcher formulated the research question "What are students' perceptions regarding learning English in non-English speaking country?"

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the research question, this study aims to determine the student perception of learning English in non-English speaking country.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study covered the academic experiences of three Indonesian EFL students who participated in an international credit transfer program in Taiwan for one semester. It included the challenges faced by EFL students, the role of the foreign environment around them, and the impact on their English language proficiency.

The limitations of this study included the small number of participants, which means that the results do not represent all EFL students in Taiwan. Additionally, individual experiences varied, which could affect the consistency of the findings. The research was also conducted over a specific period and did not



cover long-term changes in the experiences of EFL students. Furthermore, the qualitative case study approach used in the research has limitations in terms of generalizing the findings compared to quantitative studies.

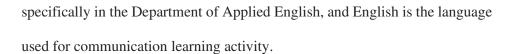
1.5 Significances of the Study

The researcher hopes that through this research, readers can provide valuable insights to language educators regarding the benefits of international credit transfer programs in enhancing the English skills of EFL learners and the development of more effective teaching methods. In addition, understanding the benefits of the international credit transfer program in non-English speaking countries gives EFL learners more informed decisions about language learning experiences and better strategies for improved outcomes. Identifying the existence of other languages from the foreign environment can be a consideration for EFL students in participating in programs similar to the research context.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To clarify the key terms used in this research, the researcher put some definitions about the topic.

a. *EFL* (*English as a Foreign Language*) *students* refer to individuals who learn English as a foreign language. In this research, EFL students refer to sixth-semester English education students at a private university in Malang, who in the fifth semester of the 2023/2024 academic year, participated in a one-semester student exchange program at National Pingtung University,



- b. *Journey* refers to the experience of three EFL students' language learning during their participation in the international credit transfer program in a non-English speaking country, Taiwan. This includes the challenges they faced, the language learning process, and the impact they felt on their English language proficiency after returning from the program.
- c. Non-English Speaking Country refers to a country where English is not the main or official language. The non-English speaking country in this research is Taiwan, where the main language used in daily activities is Mandarin. Meanwhile, English is a foreign language and the usage and mastery of this language is not an obligation.
- d. *International credit transfer program* is educational initiatives that allow students from one institution or country to study and live temporarily in another institution or country. In this research, the program involves studying abroad at National Pingtung University for one semester. The program is attended by five participants from two different faculties, specifically three students from the English Education program in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education and two others from the Faculty of Economics and Business. This program is a manifestation of the Internationalization University program. The activities include attending lectures, participating in cultural exchanges, and conducting comparative field research abroad and domestic.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study on the experiences of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in non-English speaking countries. In this concluding chapter, the implications of the study's findings for educational institutions, language educators, and policymakers are discussed. These insights aim to contribute to the improvement of English language education programs in similar educational settings.

5.1 Conclusions

This research examines students' experiences and perceptions in learning English in non-native English-speaking country. The study's findings indicate that students face various initial challenges, particularly in adapting to differences in accent and culture. These factors often lead to difficulties in understanding and communicating effectively during the early stages of learning, given that accent differences can influence both listening comprehension and language production.

Furthermore, this research also demonstrates that the foreign environment factor is crucial in encouraging students to practice communicating in English continuously. The environment that demands constant use of English both inside and outside the classroom compels students to apply their language skills in real-life situations. Being immersed in a foreign environment that requires daily English communication has a significantly positive impact on their language proficiency.

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This sustained practice accelerates the learning process and enables students to improve their English language skills more quickly and efficiently. Specifically, they become more fluent in speaking, better at understanding different accents, and more capable of adapting to various communication contexts.

Therefore, despite initial barriers, the pressure to continuously use English in daily life environments provides significant benefits for students' mastery of the English language, even in non-English speaking countries. This research underscores the importance of immersion and sustained practice in learning a foreign language, as well as the need for additional support to help students overcome initial challenges in language and cultural adaptation. These findings offer valuable insights for educational institutions and language instructors in designing effective learning programs for students.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings of the research on EFL students' experiences in non-English speaking countries, it is expected to provide valuable insights for educational institutions and language instructors in designing programs to enhance English language proficiency. This research should also serve as a consideration in designing appropriate and effective curricula and creating a conducive learning environment in local educational institutions, such as incorporating language extracurricular activities and emphasizing daily language practice. Additionally, this research can be an important consideration for students in choosing and participating in similar programs, allowing them to maximize the benefits of learning English in non-English speaking countries. Furthermore, different research



methods can be utilized to gain more detailed insights into the benefits of learning English in non-English speaking countries by measuring the specific levels of English language proficiency development for future research.





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