

Motivation and Perceptions towards International Exchange Program: Strategies of ESP Students

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ABSTRACT

English is an international language. It has an essential role in disseminating information, particularly in the global context. Learning English as a foreign language has grown popular for studying including ESP learners. The aim of this research is to explore the motivations and perceptions of ESP students involved in international exchange programs, aiming to explain how such initiatives serve as a strategic approach to advance participants' linguistic skills and intercultural awareness. This research uses narrative inquiry by Clandinin (2006) involving an ESP learner as a participant. The results reveal that the motivation, perception, and strategy of the international exchange program affect participants in participating, and those programs have future benefits for participants. The motivation included high in the spirit of learning, curiosity, clear goals, ambitious surroundings, and the need to adapt to the program. The perception is divided into two, before carrying out the program and after carrying out the program. Then, there are several strategies for learning English including participants who did not make English the focal point of the endeavor, using English in the daily lives of as many English as possible, and being as familiar with the language as when naturally speaking the first language.

Keywords: ESP; Motivation; Perception; International Exchange Program

INTRODUCTION

ESP programs, which focus on teaching English for specific purposes such as business, medicine, or engineering, have become a vital component of many educational institutions around the world. Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.19) define ESP as an approach to language learning where students' reasons for learning are the basis for all decisions regarding content and methods. In this global market competition, the ESP course sounds prominent because it provides students with English skills in their field (Ruminar et al., 2020). The main aim of the program is to equip students with the language skills necessary to excel in their chosen field, thereby enhancing their career prospects and global competitiveness. However, the success of an ESP program depends largely on the student's ability to adapt to new cultural environments and navigate the complexities of international communication.

The concept of international exchange programs has become increasingly popular among students, particularly in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). These programs provide a unique opportunity for students to immerse themselves in a foreign culture, improve their language skills, and gain valuable life experience. A preliminary evaluation of students who had participated in an international student exchange program found that the program provided several

benefits. Such as, students can strengthen their English language abilities, develop their English language skills, and boost their self-esteem and motivation (Suryanto et al., 2022). This is where international exchange programs come into play. By providing students with the opportunity to study abroad and immerse themselves in a foreign culture, these programs offer a unique opportunity for students to develop their language skills, cultural awareness, and adaptability in real-world settings. The benefits of international exchange programs are numerous, including increased language proficiency, increased cultural understanding, and increased confidence in communicating across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

However, the success of such programs depends largely on the motivation and perception of the students involved. Motivation is an important aspect of any learning process, and international exchange programs are no exception. In the same vein, Pavel (2020) admits that in ESP, such as English for Medical Purposes, motivation is considered the crucial facet required during the learning process (as cited in Ruminar et al., 2020). Students who participate in these programs often have diverse motivations, ranging from personal growth and self-improvement to career advancement and professional development. For example, some students may be driven by a desire to improve their language skills, while others may seek to expand their cultural understanding and adaptability. Understanding these motivations is critical to designing effective strategies that meet the diverse needs and goals of ESP students. Perceptions also play an important role in shaping ESP students' experiences in international exchange programs. Pareek (1996) suggests that perception is the process of receiving, selecting, coordinating, interpreting, testing, and reacting to sensory stimuli or data. Perception is closely related to the five senses because perception occurs after the object concerned sees, hears, feels something, or coordinates and interprets it so that perception arises. Student's perceptions of the host culture, language, and academic environment can significantly influence their motivation and overall satisfaction with the program. For example, students who have positive perceptions of the host culture are more likely to be motivated and engaged in the program, whereas those who have negative perceptions may struggle to adapt and feel disconnected from the experience. Furthermore, students' perceptions of the academic environment, including the quality of instruction and level of support, may also influence their motivation and academic performance.

Many previous studies have discussed the motivation and perceptions of English students in international exchange programs. Ruminar et al., (2020) reveal that extrinsic motivation was dominant in completing the task in the International Exchange program. The positive and negative perceptions of the three aspects (Topic, platform, and interaction) would be a valuable source for those who attempt a similar online letter exchange program. However, little study discusses the motivation and perceptions of non-English students, especially ESP learners. The study by Ruminar et al., (2020) investigated student motivation intrinsically and extrinsically and investigated their perceptions of the International Online Letter Exchange Program (OLEP). This article explores the motivations and perceptions of ESP students involved in international exchange programs, aiming to explain how such initiatives serve as a strategic approach to advance participants' linguistic skills and intercultural awareness. By studying the motivational factors that encourage students to take part in international exchange and exploring their perceptions of the experience, this study seeks to illuminate the important role of international exchange programs in ESP students' educational trajectories. Through a nuanced examination of motivations and perceptions, this article seeks to offer valuable insights for educators, program administrators, and policymakers involved in organizing international exchange opportunities for ESP students,

thereby fostering more enriched and interconnected learning environments globally. This study addresses three research questions:

1. What are ESP learners' motivations for learning English for the International Exchange program?
2. What are ESP learners' perceptions of learning English for the International Exchange program?
3. What are ESP learners' strategies for learning English for the International Exchange program?

METHOD

Research Design

This research uses narrative inquiry by Clandinin (2006) which attempts to reveal the motivation and perception of an ESP student in participating in an international exchange program. The main purpose of this research is to understand the factors or motivations that contribute to their willingness to learn, perception, and strategies in the international student exchange program and the challenges and ways to overcome them.

Research Context

This research is located at the Universitas Islam Malang located in the Malang City area, Indonesia. This university was founded in 1981 and has very adequate learning facilities such as LCDs, laboratories, and internet connections also provide many study programs. However, for non-English study program students, English lessons are only 2 hours a week. However, that is not an obstacle for students to exchange students. Fortunately, Universitas Islam Malang offers many programs like international conferences, international student exchange, international scholarship programs, international internship programs, and so on. One of the most often offered in the exchange student program was Taiwan. Students who attend an exchange program in Taiwan will have the opportunity to study in different academic environments, experience Taiwan's rich culture, and explore interesting tourist attractions there.

International exchange programs such as these benefit students widely, including improved interpersonal skills, the development of global understanding, and increased competitiveness in global job markets. By following these programs, students can broaden their horizons, strengthen cross-cultural connections, and develop themselves both financially and academically. Students who attend an exchange program in Taiwan will have the opportunity to study in different academic environments, experience Taiwan's rich culture, and explore interesting tourist attractions there. In addition to Taiwan, Malaysia is a popular destination in the international exchange program. Students who chose Malaysia as an exchange goal would be able to explore natural beauty, understand cultural diversity, and learn from different educational systems.

Participant's profile

The participant was taken from one of the student exchange participants at Pingtung University in Taiwan, Lala (pseudonym), a student at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Islam Malang. Lala registered for the semester credit student exchange program at Pingtung University Taiwan in semester 5, through various selection processes. The program is his first international program. She has great curiosity and has clear goals to achieve her future, she also uses English as the main bridge to reach her final goal. This research focuses on the motivation, perceptions, and strategies of one of the student exchange participants at Pingtung University, Taiwan.

Data collection

Research data were collected through several interviews to check and ensure consistent participant responses to achieve data saturation. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to ensure flexibility in participant responses and interviewers were conducted for flexibility in exploring deeper responses and following up on participant responses. During the interviews, we asked research participants several questions related to factors contributing to their motivation, perceptions, and strategies during Student Exchange in Taiwan and how they overcame these problems. Here are the Key interview questions that may develop during the interview:

- 1) How do you see yourself and the environment around you?
- 2) How did you choose to learn English for the international exchange program?
- 3) How did you participate in the program's activities?
- 4) How did you cope with the difficulties?
- 5) How do you see yourself in the future?

Data analysis

We used data analysis techniques described by Braun and Clarke (2014) to examine the data. The initial step is to reread it several times to gain a deeper understanding of the information. The purpose of this step is to analyze participants' descriptions of the things that motivate them to take part in the exchange program, perceptions about the exchange program, and strategies for learning English for international exchange programs. The second is that a thorough understanding of the data has been achieved, coding has been performed, and patterns relating to the topic being investigated are discovered. To identify emerging themes, the next step is to collect or group comparable statements. The final stage involves grouping topics based on what makes the interviewees motivated and what their strategies are for learning English for the program.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Motivations for the International Exchange Program

A review of the data reveals several themes, that emerge regarding the factors that influence participant interests. They include curiosity, necessity, purpose, and a spirit of reasonable demands. These participants' extraordinary drive promotes and piques interest in the foreign exchange program, which Lala describes as follows:

"I think of myself as one who has the passion to learn high enough to be motivated by such things as curiosity, clear goals, people around who have high ambitions, and demands."

Participants' perception of the international exchange program

After data analysis, two distinct perceptions were discovered. The first perception when participants have not yet followed the international exchange program, the participants think that international exchange students will be useful and that there are a lot of experiences. The second perception when participants have already carried out an international exchange program, participants feel that the program has both benefited and experienced if it is proactive and can look for opportunities. Lala shared that:

"Before leaving I had a perception, that it would be useful and experience. But having implemented my perceptions somewhat changed, the benefits and experiences we will gain only when we go through our proactive exchange of learners and look for opportunities."

We also asked about the participant's future perspective on the International Exchange Program for participant's future. This was done to construe the participant's reflections after

exploring their past and present experiences. The experience of participants who have studied abroad will open greater opportunities to work in multinational companies. Lala for instance, in the interview stated that:

"With the English skills I have, I had a view that whatever I do in the future will be more exposed to the international realm, whether from the work standards or the marketing. And the experience I have studied abroad will also open up greater opportunities for me to work in multinational companies."

Participant's

Some themes have emerged after analyzing data on strategies in learning English for international exchange programs that are, among other things, English as a goal point, and applying English in everyday activities, which Lala says:

"First, I did not make English the point or the finish of what I was trying to do, but I made it a tool and a bridge to make it easier for me to reach my ultimate goal. And I think the most effective way to learn English is to "live by English" and surround our lives with as much English as possible so that we are as familiar with the language as we were when we naturally spoke our first language."

Discussion

The experience of the participant was first seen from the motivational background of enrolling in the international exchange program at the Universitas Islam Malang. In interviews, participants hinted at personal and intrinsic motivation to learn the program. Participants consider themselves to be reasonably high in the spirit of learning when motivated by such things as curiosity, clear goals, ambitious surroundings, and the need to adapt to the program (Quinnell et al., n.d.) reveals that there are several motivations to join International Exchange Programs, including goals such as the desire to travel overseas and have fun, personal and social development, the curiosity to know about the country, and academic interest. Interestingly, participants also related that participant had two distinct perceptions. Before carrying out the program, participants have the perception, that the exchange of learners will be useful and will have many experiences in their lives. However, having implemented a slight change in outlook, benefits, and experiences will only come when undergoing a proactive exchange of learners and looking for opportunities. In post-doctor interviews, share several strategies for learning English. The first of these participants did not make English the focal point of the endeavor, but instead used it as a tool and bridge to make it easier for the participants' principal purpose. Based on the most effective way to learn English is to live in the daily lives of as many English as possible, and to be as familiar with the language as when naturally speaking the first language (González Ardeo, 2016). find that proficient learners regularly use a wide range of ELSs and that they are able to improve their vocabulary and communicate with others in English on a regular basis because of these methods. Furthermore, participants in the study asserted that the experience of learning English would be more exposure to the international sphere, either from work standards or marketers and experience studying abroad would also open a greater opportunity to work for multinational companies.

CONCLUSION

The International exchange program can increase students' innovation, motivation, and active participation in language learning. The study reveals the motives, perceptions, and strategies of the international exchange program using narrative inquiry as its methodology. Our research is open to limitations in generalities because this is qualitative research. Studies are now recruiting

codes who have joined the international exchange program in Taiwan. The results of the analysis reveal that the motivation, perception, and strategy of the international exchange program affect participants in participating, and those programs have future benefits for participants. Our study is open to expressing in terms of generalizability as it is qualitative research in nature. A study with more participants and different research methods may produce different results. Finally, it gave a new insight into the international exchange program at the university level on motivation, perception, and strategy.

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