



Revisiting the Roles of a University Language Center: Students' Perceptions Towards Foreign Language Services in a Multilingual Higher Education Context

Amrih Bektu Utami^(✉) and Margana

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
bektutami@uny.ac.id

Abstract. This study is aimed at finding out the extent to which students' perceptions towards the roles of language centers in higher education context clearly stated the implication of further better services and management of the language center. The study explores how students perceive the function of a language center in relation to their improvement of their language competence and performance. By using a set of well-developed questionnaires, researchers conducted the study and collected the data from 303 participants of higher education students with multilingual language background. The results demonstrate that a language center in a higher education context need to provide diversification as well as standardization, particularly, on language services offered to all of university stakeholders, especially, the students taking parts as active users of the language center. The reported results have shown a special role of a language center and the opportunity of further language policy maker in a university level to illuminate the roles of the language center as an intermediary between students and academic language services.

Keywords: Language centers · students' perception · foreign language services · multilingual

1 Introduction

Language centers in higher education have a structure and organization that represents the environment, history, and context in which they have grown. Universities have recognized and implemented a variety of remedies to new needs in response to huge increases in demand for language services. A language center's function can be summarized as providing language education and training to non-specialist students, i.e., students who are not majoring in language and literature, studying literary, or linguistic studies [1].

The functions of language center have been acknowledged by some experts as one of the main factors to boost students' academic capacity. According to Morrison [2], a language center serves four primary functions: integrating language learning and independent learning together, enabling learners to increase both linguistic competency and

independent learning skills, offering appropriate resources, and giving learner support. Their report thus resonates aims of broadening opportunity to higher education nationally and universities' internationalization.

In terms of providing adequate services for foreign language learning, a university language center also meets the demand for university stakeholders. Even though the challenge, particularly that is of students' motivation, is obvious, improving its service to encounter the obstacle can be more practical. This is because.

motivation and engagement have long been recognized as determinants of foreign language learning and a university language center has its own position to provide the answer.

Student perceptions related to a phenomenon, both social and educational phenomena, are certainly very important for the progress of related parties. This can be input and improvement for conditions that are not yet good as well as suggestions for quality improvement [3] Despite the fact that language centers are widely spread, there have been few studies on the subject, especially, on students' perceptions towards services provided by a university language center to help them boost their knowledge and competence of learning foreign languages.

The aim of study is therefore to explore students' perceptions of their experience in relation to their encounter with a language center in the university. More specifically this study examines the following research questions: what are students' perception toward the language center services to help them improve their academic language performance in a multilingual.

2 Research Method

This study used a qualitative approach to understand people's interpretations of reality by taking into account their experiences and opinions in a specific context. Researchers used an inductive approach to gather data, support the findings, and understand the phenomenon from the participants' point of view. Furthermore, an unstructured interview with open-ended questions delivered to the language center's staff was used as a data collection tool [4].

2.1 Overview of Data Collection

Method	Focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire (n = 303) • Students and Staff Semi-structured Interview (n = 10) 	Language services preferred by students to achieve their academic language performance
	Students' academic language performance improved
	Students' perception toward language service available in their university

Informed consent forms for respondents were created to justify the ethical consideration. The students could understand the purpose of the research, their level of participation, and the use of the obtained information, that is, for purely academic and research purposes, through these documents. They agreed to fill in the questionnaires anonymously because they understood the scope of the study [5].

3 Findings and Discussion

Based on the survey data obtained, students are generally multilingual. Multilingualism is the ability to use languages interchangeably according to the conditions of the speakers at that time without measuring the ability of the languages used (KBBI; Chaer, 2004). A total of 254 participants (83.83%) used Indonesian in their daily lives, followed by the use of Javanese by 230 participants (75.91%), and English by 54 participants (17.82%). Detailed information about the language used by participants in daily life can be seen in Table below.

No	Languages used in students' daily life	Frequency	Percentage
1	Indonesian	254	83.83%
2	Javanese	230	75.91%
3	English	54	17.82%
4	Sundanese	10	3.30%
5	Arabic	2	0.66%
6	Melayu	2	0.66%
7	Banjar	2	0.66%
8	Bangka	1	0.33%
9	Padang	1	0.33%
10	Bengkulu	1	0.33%
11	Japanese	1	0.33%
12	Palembang	1	0.33%
13	Lampung	1	0.33%
14	Minang	1	0.33%
15	Simalugun	1	0.33%
16	Other local languages	1	0.33%
17	Korean	1	0.33%
18	Mandarin	1	0.33%
19	Spanish	1	0.33%
20	French	1	0.33%

A total of 264 participants (40.18%) of the 303 participants who filled out the survey thought that English should be facilitated by the UNY Language Training Center.

In addition, Indonesian (19.18%), Javanese (15.37%), and Arabic (11.42%) were also deemed necessary to be facilitated by the UNY Language Training Center. There are several foreign and regional languages that were also proposed by some participants, detailed data related to these languages are listed in Table below.

No	Languages students perceive the University Language Center needs to teach or facilitate	Frequency	Percentage
1	English	264	40.18%
2	Indonesian	126	19.18%
3	Javanese	101	15.37%
4	Arabic	75	11.42%
5	Mandarin	26	3.96%
6	Deutsch	17	2.59%
7	Japanese	17	2.59%
8	French	12	1.83%
9	Korean	9	1.37%
10	Spanish	5	0.76%
11	Romanian	1	0.15%
12	Sign Language	1	0.15%
13	Sundanese	1	0.15%
14	Thai	1	0.15%
15	Dutch	1	0.15%

According to the findings, the majority of the students choose English as their preferred language service because it is one of students' requirement to graduate from the university and is of the most in-demand languages for finding work. Furthermore, some students take English courses solely to fulfill a graduation requirement. Furthermore, there are some complications regarding the development of speaking skills in online English learning. In addition, low student participation is caused by a lack of interest or a fear of making mistakes. As a result, different techniques and methods must be implemented in order to carry out the teaching-learning process of English as a proficiency in an effective manner and thus meet all of the students' expectations.

4 Conclusions

Despite the fact that students are in the need to improve their academic language proficiency, especially in English, it cannot be simply put aside the relevance and significant importance of multilingual aspect of the students. Coming from different sociocultural background, the students essentially have enough comprehensible input which should be considered by language center stakeholders, particularly when providing the services, developing curriculum, as well as appropriately provide materials that address and help the students find their comprehensible input during the process of learning the language.

It is, therefore, the multicultural context of the students must be seen as the strength to dig more deeply what program and services the language center in higher education should have and thus it can eventually help not just the students, but also all of the university stakeholders, to fully engaged and finally can achieve their expected outcome of their academic language proficiency level.

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