

“I LEARNED SOMETHING”: A SURVEY OF INDONESIAN STUDENTS’ VOICES ON THE SHORT FIELD TRIP PROGRAM

Nina Desmita and Lia Haryana

Universitas Negeri Malang

nina.desmita.1802218@students.um.ac.id; lia.haryana16@gmail.com

Abstract: Communicating in English, abroad, could be sufficient language exposure for foreign language learners. Encountering different accents, understanding the culture, and doing transactional communication have been expected to be the purpose of following the short field trip program in five to seven days. Interested by the purpose of this program, this present study attempts to know the students’ voices on a short field trip program. Survey research using an online questionnaire to 68 students from varied universities in Indonesia, whoever joined the study tour program, was chosen to achieve the aim of this study. The result showed that a short field trip program is essential and valuable to help students having a good international experience, especially in doing a transactional of communication. The respondents agreed that the short-field trip program had success in increasing their speaking ability by using English. They also thought that intercultural competence has a significant role as long as this program. Therefore, the short field trip program could be used as a functional language exposure for foreign language learners.

Keywords: *students’ voices, intercultural competence, short field trip program*

INTRODUCTION

Intelligence, learning strategies, motivation, and learning preferences are needed to influence the process of second language acquisition. Besides, the natural acquisition context also exists to be one of the factors to help students acquire the second language easier (Lightbown, 1999). Since the theory stated that natural language context helps the students to acquire their second language faster than other factors, some previous works revealed that the existence of some study abroad programs such as students’ exchange program, short-term program, teacher training program in academic environment (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2017; Take & Shoraku, 2017). Previous works found that the study abroad program has some purposes, and it could be language and cultural exposure to the students to increase self-efficacy and to have cultural intelligence (Nguyen, Je, & Rojas, 2018), and intercultural competence (Hepple et al., 2017). Then those effects help to decrease misinterpretation and miscommunication in doing communication by using English (Abdulai, Ibrahim, & Mohammed, 2017) and also developing the language skills and intercultural communication (Akpınar & Ünald, 2014).

Nowadays, a short field trip program as part of a study abroad program is the focus of some studies. It is shown by several studies that have examined the relationship between short field trip programs with intercultural competence. For instance, researchers from several countries such as Turkey (Akpınar & Ünald, 2014), Australia (Hepple et al., 2017), Pakistan (Su, 2017), China (Jackson, n.d.), and Indonesia (Sukmayadi & Indonesia, 2018) had conducted studies which linked with intercultural competence. The finding of these studies exposed that intercultural competence was a crucial element for learning and acquiring a language, including English as Foreign language. The term intercultural competence is well known in many other terms, including intercultural communicative competence (ICC), transcultural communication, cross-cultural adaptation, and intercultural sensitivity (Fantini, 2006). Several studies also point out that the study on intercultural competence is still desired to conduct.

Interestingly, some previous studies which related to intercultural competence focused on the way how intercultural competence can be gotten by pre-service teacher (Pilonieta, Medina, &

Hathaway, 2017), in-service teacher (He, Lundgren, & Pynes, 2017), foreign language and science teacher trainers (Akpinar & Ünal, 2014) with duration of program at least one month until one year. However, in Indonesia, students are given a subject which is known as Cross Culture Understanding (CCU). This subject has the objective to enhance students' intercultural competence, immersion experience, and to trigger the process of second language acquisition. Most of the program studies of Universities in Indonesia provide a study tour program which is held in two or more countries for a week to achieve the purpose of CCU. From the duration of the program, this program is the shortest compared to other intercultural programs in another country. Moreover, only "a few studies researched study program with short duration". Hence, this present study attempted to describe students' perception of Indonesians' short field trip programs and how their transaction meaning activity in the study tour program.

METHOD

This present research focused on investigating the students' understanding of having experience and doing the transactional meaning experience of a short-field trip program as the exposure to help them acquiring and learning English as a Foreign Language. Sixty-eight respondents of this study came from various universities in Indonesia, and they had an experience in succeeding short field trip program. The online survey was spread out with a questionnaire with nineteen questions to attain the focus of this study. The results of the online survey were analyzed by classifying them based on the theme. The triangulation process was done by analyzing and comparing the results of the study with those previous studies to acquire the validation of data. The interpretation of data and results were described to accomplish how students' perception and transaction meaning experience in the short-field trip program.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings of this research are based on the respondents' answers from the survey. The questions in the survey consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Based on the data collected from the questionnaire, for the first question about the destination countries, the majority of the respondents had visited three countries in the short field trip program, namely Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. Then, four respondents had ever visited India as the destination country. The second question was a confirmation of the respondents of interaction with the native of that country or not. The majority of the respondents, about 75%, said that they did much interaction, and only 25% of respondents said that they did not make interaction with the native. Besides, to convey their meaning in communication, 58.8% of the respondents revealed that they used pictures on their phones in order to communicate with the local citizens so the messages can be delivered based on their intention, as stated in the third question. Also, for the fourth question, 94.1% of respondents used body gestures like hand gestures and head gestures for communicating.

Moreover, for the fifth question, 73.1% of the respondents said that they learned the destination countries' national language before they visited that countries and 67.2% of them tried to use that language as the tool for communication. There are some simple national language that the respondents use for communication, namely expressing thanks and gratitude, e.g., *mekh-si*, greeting, e.g., *Sawaddee Krab/Sawaddee Ka*, and apologizing, e.g., *sumimasen*, expression to ask the price list and direction to public places and public facilitation based on the norms and the social and cultural context of the destination countries which is

stated in the sixth question. Based on the seventh question about which simple national language the majority of respondents use, 69.1% of the respondents use greeting as the first expression they tried to speak whenever they met the local citizens.

Furthermore, the eighth question relates to the students' perception of accent and intonation, 97.1% of the respondents said that local citizens speak with different accent/intonation and 58.8% of the respondents said that those accents and intonations influence the way the respondents communicate with the local citizens. Due to different accents and intonation, 100% of respondents said that this case made them understand the effect of culture toward multicultural communication. Besides, during the field trip program, when the respondents could not understand what they want to convey in the communication, the respondents tried to ask for help. 48.5% of the respondents asked the help from the tourist guide, 29.4% asked the help from friends, and the rest ask the help from lecturers. Besides, based on the ninth question, 83.3% of the respondents said that this short field-trip program helps them in enhancing their ability to speak English. Due to that reason, 91.2% of the respondents stated that this field trip program needs to be kept. This idea is strengthened by the respondents' suggestions for the future program.

"The duration of the field trip program needs to be extended so the students will be given much time to interact with the local citizens."

Subject 3

"It is better to choose the native English countries as the destination countries, so the program will be run effectively because the students will speak English wherever they are."

Subject 5

"The program should be arranged well, and the schedule should be arranged clearly."

Subject 17

"The destination places should be the places where the students can enhance their knowledge like universities, museums, etc."

Subject 18

"The students are given the simple task that will force them to communicate with the local citizens, so they will try hard to speak in English."

Subject 27

"The students are asked to learn about the culture and the local language of the destination countries before visiting those countries."

Subject 53

"The program should focus on creating intercultural interaction with the local citizen without asking the help from the tourist guide, friends, or lecturers."

Subject 64

Discussion

The discussion was done as the triangulation process by analyzing the data, dividing into three big themes, and making a comparison with the previous works; and the discussion was elaborated as follow:

A. Students' Perception of Short-Field Trip Program

Online survey results revealed that the short-field trip program gave respondents a big chance to communicate with natives using English. They also felt the increase of their ability after following this program. This result related to previous, which stated that the short-field trip program could help the process of second or foreign language acquisition (Yang, Xiang, & Chun, 2018). Another positive effect that students got is the experience of intercultural communication in which understanding how culture can influence the language in doing communication, and it is related to a study that revealed that the short field trip program helps students to be multicultural and global students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This idea is in line with the research finding by (Slantcheva-durst & Danowski, 2018) who stated that there is three graduate students' attainment in all three areas of multicultural competence after following short field trip namely awareness, skills, and knowledge. The awareness consists of two kinds, and the first is inner awareness, which relates to someone's values and beliefs in the context of the new world. The second one is outer awareness, which relates to prominent cultural landmarks and food. The students learned about educational developments and policies within the history and culture of each country and shared their experiences with the international cultures through food. Also, the skills relate to navigate challenges of everyday life in another country and to navigate group dynamics because most of the time, the short-field trip is conducted in a group, not individually. Furthermore, knowledge relates to foreign higher education, financial policies in other countries, and students in other countries. This knowledge can be acquired much when the field trip incorporated various college visits, educational sessions, and workshops with international partners.

Furthermore, according to (Powell, Biederman, Lewis, & Short-term, 2017), the short-field trip program resulted in substantial intrapersonal growth and skill acquisition, like increasing cultural awareness, acceptance of cultures other than own, and improved foreign language skills. Besides that, this program also helps the students develop culture-specific knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills. This knowledge, attitude, and skills can increase the students' awareness of verbal and non-verbal differences across cultural groups and the ability to negotiate the cultural differences (He et al., 2017). Regarding the students' awareness of verbal and non-verbal differences, this study tour program helps the students to carry meaningful conversations by using drawings and hand gestures. These findings are also strengthened by the answer of the participants in the online questionnaire in which asking them about whether they ever use drawings on their phone and also body language, namely hand, and head gestures or not.

Based on the finding, participants use their phone and the gestures in order to make the message, or the goals of the communication can be delivered based on their intention. The ways that participants used in conveying their meaning by giving hand and body gesture are synchronized with the previous work identified that the body gesture is needed to understand vocabulary meaning because some of the vocabularies are not provided by students' ability or knowledge of vocabulary in the second language (Compernelle & Smotrova, 2017).

Related to the result of online survey which stated that the use of phone as the device to convey the meaning has similarity with previous work revealed that a technology like mobile phone could help to transform the meaning because the body gesture also could make a confusion between speaker and listener (Helen, Regine, & Agnes, 2018).

Since they got a definite effect from this program, they thought that this program should be sustained in the future as the language input for acquiring and learning English as a foreign

language. However, the respondents also suggested that this program could be better if this program can be held for a longer time or given extended time. Therefore, the students can have longer time to explore the destination countries like exploring the culture, the “Do” and “Don’ts’ in that countries, and the habits of the citizen in which is supported by the previous research that revealed short-field trip program helped the students to navigate challenges of everyday life in another country (Slantcheva-durst & Danowski, 2018). The Do and Don'ts and also the culture shock are the part of challenges that people will face in another country. The second one has a more precise program, for instance, visiting campuses, museums, and other places where the students can increase their knowledge and their English ability at the same time. The third one is having a clear schedule and an excellent itinerary so the program can be run well, and the last the destination country that will be visited is a native country, so the students are forced to speak in English wherever they are.

B. The Effect of Culture in Communication

Based on the experience in following the field trip program, they agreed that the culture of the country which they had visited influenced the use of the English language and the way of native doing communication. Two things which influenced are the natives' accents and intonation. The respondents agreed that accent and intonation influenced their language when they are doing communication by using English with native speakers of the country which they visited. For instance, they visited Malaysia, then Malay's accent and intonation influenced their English. Sometimes the accent and intonation also become the reason of getting confused when they did the communication with the native speakers. Even though they got confused, all of the respondents approved that the confusion made them more understood how culture influences the use of English as an international language. Therefore, this program gives intercultural experience in communication for respondents. Those results are related with previous works which show that the role of cultural awareness would enable interpersonal communication, in which communicative competence cannot be achieved without an orientation towards the other's culture (Recep, 2012) and intercultural competence can overwhelm the language and cultural barriers (Jackson, n.d.).

The confusion of respondents in a short field trip program is also proved by previous research, which stated that intercultural competence could decrease misinterpretations, misperceptions, and misunderstandings of both verbal and non-verbal communication (Abdulai et al., 2017). Furthermore, this finding is also supported by the answer of the respondents in the online questionnaire. The majority of the respondents stated that they tend to learn the destination countries' culture and language before they visit that country in order to minimize the confusion. Many of them learn about the small parts of the native language of the destination countries, like expressing thanks and gratitude, e.g., *mesh-si*, greeting, e.g., *Sawaddee Krab/Sawaddee Ka*, and apologizing, e.g., *sumimasen*. By using these kinds of expressions, the respondents can feel the intercultural experience quickly, and they created intercultural sensitivity, which can develop a mutual respect with people from other cultures (Recep, 2012).

The effect of the study tour program as the media of learning culture in communication also related to previous work stated that a short field trip program helps students to immerse the culture from the country that they have visited. The immersion program is also more operative, long-lasting experience, and meaningful hence students more engaged in the cultural (Tack, Carney, Tack, & Carney, 2018). Other previous works also stated that short-field trip program could increase cultural competence; therefore, students more understand about cultural diversity.

When the short field trip program happens in a long course, it might be more useful to students' understanding of cultural diversity and cultural competence.

C. Transactional Communication

In doing communication, there is an exchange between the communicators or the senders and the communicant or the receivers. In that exchange, there is a transactional communication in which communicators generate social realities within social and cultural contexts. In this communication, people communicate to transmit the message in order to obtain something.

Social context refers to the stated rules or unstated norms that guide the communication. The norms for communication are like do not lie to people, do not interrupt people, do not pass people in line, greet people, and thank people when they pay a compliment. Through this study tour program, the respondents indirectly learn about the norms in the destination countries, especially they learn about the norm that relates to the cultural context. This idea is in line with the answer of respondents of the online questionnaire where the differences in accent and also intonation among respondents and native speakers help respondents to understand the influence of culture toward the ways of communicating.

In addition, the cultural context includes various aspects of identities such as race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and ability. The respondents used communication strategies to overcome intercultural communication. Richards and Schmidt (2010) stated that a communication strategy is a way used to express a meaning in a second or foreign language, by the learner who has a limited command of the language. There are some strategies that the respondents used, such as they learned how to communicate by using the simple national language of the country that they visited, for instance, the expression of thanks and greetings. Some respondents also learned some expressions to ask the price list and direction to public places and public facilitation based on the norms and the social and cultural context of the destination countries. Moreover, when they get stuck to deliver what they meant, the respondents chose their tour guide to help them rather than the lecturer or their friends in order to avoid misunderstanding because the tour guide is the one who is well known about the cultures and the norms in the country they visited.

Furthermore, the idea of transactional meaning strengthened by ideas from Richards (2008) stated that talk as transaction refers to situations where the focus is on what is said or done. The message and making oneself understood clearly and accurately is the central focus, rather than the participants. This idea is also supported by Burns (as cited in Richards, 2015) who distinguishes two different types of talk as transaction: The first type involves situations where the focus is on giving and receiving information and where the participants focus primarily on what it is said or achieved (e.g., asking someone for directions). Accuracy may not be a priority, as long as the information is successfully communicated or understood. The second type focuses on obtaining goods or services, such as checking into a hotel or ordering food in a restaurant.

CONCLUSIONS

The online survey has been approved that having international experience by following a short field trip program gives more understanding of the using of English language abroad where intercultural competence is needed to know the influence of culture on the language. By doing transactional communication, the short field trip program is agreed upon as the language exposure for students to acquire and to learn English in the real context. However, this program still needs some improvements in deciding the country that will be visited and in designing

activity for a short field trip program. Hence this program should be kept to give better exposure in acquiring English as a foreign language and international competence.

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