PROCEEDINGS

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New Paradigms in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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The Roles of English Courses as Adjunct Non-Formal Education upon University Students' English Performances

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Abstract

In this modern time, education is getting more and more important. Nobody can survive to live in the global environment without enough education. The roles of education these days are inevitable because of the demand of job fields, competition in workplace and the ability to adapt with the environment. Education can be divided into two big areas which are formal education and non-formal education. Both types of education can provide people with adequate skills to compete in many aspects of their lives. English course is an adjunct non-formal education for high school students. The purpose of this study is to elaborate the roles of English courses upon first year university students' English capabilities. Fifty first year university students who had had taken English courses during their secondary educational years and 50 additional first year students who had not taken the courses were selected to participate in the study. All of them had passed a quite hard enrollment to be accepted in the university, hence they all could be regarded as higher-than-average students in their intelligence. They then had to undergo an English test to measure their English performances in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. On the average, students who had had taken English courses obtained better scores than their counterparts who had not taken the courses, notably in listening and speaking, but in a lesser extent also in reading and writing. It was concluded that English courses as an adjunct non-formal education in English were advantageous for the students, mainly in the aspects of listening and speaking.

Keywords: English course, English performances, non-formal education, university students

Introduction

In this modern time, education is getting more and more important. Nobody can survive to live in the global environment without enough education. The roles of education these days are inevitable because of the demand of job fields, competition in workplace and the ability to adapt with the environment. Education can be divided into two big areas which are formal education and non-formal education. Both types of education can provide people with adequate skills to compete in many aspects of their lives. It is interesting here to note that non formal education has a significant relationship to formal education. One subject that is dominant in non formal education is English.

English that is known as the first international language has become the trend these days. People who study and master English have their own prestige. That is why many people want to study English in some English courses. While English becomes so dominant in most English courses in big cities like Jakarta, many parents want their children to study in top universities. The problem is that English has become the standard of measurement for those who want to study in universities. That is why many students want to improve their English by having self-study, private courses and studying at English courses in their cities.

In line with the above fact, this study attempts to focus on the roles of English courses as adjunct non-formal education upon university students’ English performances. Hence, the aim of this study is to reveal the roles of English courses as adjunct non-formal education upon university students’ English performances.
Methods
This study was performed in a prominent private university in Jakarta in 2012. The preliminary study was done to separate first year students in some classes into two groups, i.e. those who had had taken English courses during their secondary educational years and those who had not. We conducted preliminary study in 10 classes of first year students, chosen randomly in the university. Taking English course is defined as having attended an English course for at least 3 consecutive months during the student's period in junior high school or senior high school.

Fifty students were chosen randomly from the first group and 50 others from the second group. By using a questionnaire, we collected some background data of the students, namely their age, gender, type of senior high school, location of senior high school, and parental occupation.

Then we let the students to undergo the evaluation process to measure their capabilities in English. An English proficiency test that is equal to TOEFL which consists of listening, speaking, writing and reading was used as the research instrument to measure students' proficiency in English in this study. We also delivered some open questions for them about their experiences in studying English during secondary educational years and from whom they mainly did obtain their capabilities in English.

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical computer program Stata 12. We used t-test to compare the English performances of the two groups. Qualitative data obtained from open questions were treated in qualitative manners.

Results
A hundred first-year students participated in the study, 50 of them had had taken English courses during their high school episodes and 50 others had not taken the courses. They consisted of 73 male students and 27 females, most of them were less than 20-years old. They came from 88 senior high school, half of the students came from public high school and the other half from private school. Most of the students (76%) came from high schools in Java, while the rest came from high schools outside Java. Complete data on characteristics of study sample is showed in table 1.
Table 1 Main characteristics of the English study participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>With Course</th>
<th>Without Course</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Age:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ≤ 18 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 19-20 years</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- &gt; 20 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Type of high school:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Public school</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Private school</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Former high school:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Inside Java</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Outside Java</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parental occupation:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Governmental</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Private employer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Professionals</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of English tests can be seen in table 2 and table 3. Mean value of English test for the first group (with English course) was 70.43 [95% CI: 69.52-71.35], while that in the second group (without English course) was 68.23 [95% CI: 67.38-69.08], a statistically significant difference as the confidence intervals were not overlapped.

Table 2 Mean values of English test of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>With Course</th>
<th>Without Course</th>
<th>p-value†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>74.20</td>
<td>72.24</td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>69.52</td>
<td>67.88</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>68.04</td>
<td>65.28</td>
<td>0.013*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>68.54</td>
<td>65.68</td>
<td>0.010*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English performances</td>
<td>70.43</td>
<td>68.23</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† t test; * statistically significant
Table 3 Interval estimates of the mean values of English test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- With course</td>
<td>74.20</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>72.14; 76.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Without course</td>
<td>72.24</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>70.61; 73.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- With course</td>
<td>69.52</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>67.81; 71.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Without course</td>
<td>67.88</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>66.37; 69.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- With course</td>
<td>68.04</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>66.26; 69.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Without course</td>
<td>65.28</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>63.59; 66.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- With course</td>
<td>68.54</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>66.89; 70.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Without course</td>
<td>65.68</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>63.86; 67.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further analyses, dividing the test materials and results into four conventional subgroup of English performances, i.e. reading, writing, listening, and speaking, showed statistically significant differences in the mean values of listening (68.04 in the 1st group vs 65.28 in the 2nd group) and speaking (68.54 in the 1st group vs 65.68 in the 2nd group). Mean values of reading and writing were also higher in the 1st group than those in the 2nd group, although the differences were just can be considered as nearly significant (see table 2).

As for the information obtained from open questioned, approximately 65% of the students stated that most of them master their English from outside-of-school sources, notably their parents, environments (for those who ever stayed abroad), English courses, and many others.

Discussion

Those skills of English have their own features and uniqueness. Some people can speak well, but they might not be able to write well. Accordingly, some people can listen well, but probably they might not be able to read well. Those skills are integrative skills, but to some extent they are separable. Which skills of English are actually the main concern? The spoken skills which are speaking and listening have become the first main concern. The other ones are written skills which are known as writing and reading.

The existence of communicative methods in teaching English in many English courses has brought some changes in the preferences of studying English. Speaking has become the main priority as many English courses provide a slogan “If you are not able to speak English in 30 days, we will give your money back.”

Since English is very important for both formal and non formal education, we’d like to have a study about the roles of English courses as adjunct non-formal education upon university students’ English performances. Formal education in Indonesia basically starts from elementary school, junior high school, senior high school and universities. Recently, some experts also include kindergarten and play-groups to be the part of formal education.

The most important thing in formal education is a curriculum. The curriculum is mostly implemented based on what government has stated. Some institutions develop their curriculum based on their benchmarking and the needs of environment around them. Formal education is quite demanding in the
education system itself. The question remains is that "Does English become a part of the curriculum"? The answer is "Yes". English is quite dominant in all types of curriculum. In 1980s, English was taught only in Junior High School, Senior High School and universities; on the other hand, in 2000s, English was taught in elementary school and even it was taught in the play group.

The role of English has become significant these days. Not only is English an international language, but also it opens the chance to enter more qualified schools/universities for the children in the future. As mentioned above, formal education is quite demanding and requires a strict curriculum. On the other hand, non formal education has more flexible curriculum. Non formal education has become a great alternative for those who want to be involved in job fields in earlier time. The most significant feature of all curricula in non formal education is English. English has become the requirement for those who want to work in most companies.

Many English courses recently offer many programs so that people can study English well and at last, of course, able to communicate in English. Flexible curricula and materials are adopted by different institutions so that they can earn more profits from this business. In other words, a non-formal education is more business-oriented compared to formal education.

There are four skills of English that are needed to be tested. They are listening, reading, speaking and writing. Listening and reading are called passive skills, while speaking and writing are called active skills. Based on the other classification, listening and speaking are known as spoken skills, whereas reading and writing are known as written skills.

According to Rankin (1990), listening is the most dominant skill for the mode of human communication. Listening occupies almost 50% of our daily communication. In line with this study, two studies were conducted by Ralph and Steven (1997) and Rankin (2006). They reported that listening (46%), speaking (30%), reading (16%) and writing (13%) involve our daily communication. Referring to the research done by the expert above, we can see that the proportion of our daily communication involves two spoken skills which are speaking and listening.

Most of English courses in big cities like Jakarta also focus on the skills that deal with daily communication. They expect that students will be able to use in the jobs, daily lives and other specific purposes. Moreover, according to Hinkel (2006), receptive skills such as listening and reading, share basic cognitive processes. They also argued that like reading, listening involves phonological, syntactic, and semantic orchestration of skill and the knowledge controlled by cognitive processes at the same time. Furthermore, writing skill, besides its cognitive process, requires mechanical attempts to initiate it, so the students need to be cognitively and physically prepared to embrace this skill at school age.

The participants in this study were 50 first year university students of a prominent private university in Jakarta who had never taken English courses and 50 first year university students of same university who had taken English courses. The education background of these students were from 88 senior high schools in Indonesia. They have different sexes, parents' background and ages (see table 1). All of these participants are Indonesian students who speak English as a foreign language. They only use English in the school and for some specific purposes only.

An English proficiency test that is equal to TOEFL which consists of listening, speaking, writing and reading had been used as the only research instrument to measure students' proficiency in English in this study. Simple statistical analysis was chosen because it can provide information about the attainment of skills being tested. The results of this study can be seen in table 2 and 3.
Characteristics of the participants of this study can be seen in table 1, whereas the summary of English proficiency test score analysis can be seen from table 2 and table 3. Table 2 and table 3 display the summary statistics for each language skill. Within the 2nd group (without English course), the mean of listening skill is 65.28 [95% CI: 63.59-66.97], showing the lowest attainment. On the other hand, the mean of reading skill for students who haven’t taken English course is 72.24 [95% CI: 70.61-73.87], showing the highest attainment.

Moreover, the mean of reading skill for students who have taken English course is 72.20 [95% CI: 72.14-76.26], showing the lowest attainment. On the other hand, the mean of listening skill for students who have taken English course is 68.04 [95% CI: 66.26-69.82], showing the highest attainment.

In terms of contrasting between students who haven’t taken English course and who have taken English course can be analyzed as follows:
a. The mean of reading skill for students who have taken English course is 74.20. This is apparently better than the mean of reading skill for students who haven’t taken English course. The mean of reading skill for students who haven’t taken English course is only 72.24. Statistically, the difference of 1.96 shows that taking English course has nearly significant influence ($p = 0.069$) upon the reading performances of the students.
b. The mean of writing skill for students who have taken English course is 69.52. This is also better than the mean of writing skill for students who haven’t taken English course. The mean of writing skill for students who haven’t taken English course is only 67.88. Statistically, the difference of 1.64 also shows that taking English course has nearly-significant influence ($p = 0.076$) upon the writing performances of the students.
c. The mean of speaking skill for students who have taken English course is 68.54. This is significantly better than the mean of speaking skill for students who haven’t taken English course. The mean of speaking skill for students who haven’t taken English course is only 65.68. Statistically, the difference of 2.86 shows that taking English course significantly influences ($p = 0.010$) the speaking performances of the students.
d. The mean of listening skill for students who have taken English course is 68.04. This is significantly better than the mean of listening skill for students who haven’t taken English course. The mean of listening skill for students who haven’t taken English course is only 65.28. Statistically, the difference of 2.76 shows that taking English course significantly influences ($p = 0.013$) the listening performances of the students.

Education is getting more and more important. The roles of formal and non formal education are equally important. The roles of non formal education, especially in English subject, really significantly influence the speaking and listening skills of the students. Moreover, it also slightly influences the reading and writing skills of the students.

The lowest attainment for the students who haven’t taken English course is listening. This shows that English courses as an adjunct non-formal education play significant roles to enhance the listening skills of the students. Based on the data above, the highest attainment for the students who have taken English course is speaking. It means that both spoken skills which are speaking and listening are significantly influenced by English course as an adjunct non-formal education.

It was recommended that the cooperation between formal education and non formal education should be done. This will help students perform well when they have to enter the university. Government needs to appreciate the existence of non formal education. It means that the accreditation system should also be applied to non formal education.
References


Rankin TP, 2006, “The measurement of the ability to understand spoken language”, in Language Journal, vol 78, pp 199–221.