

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the education field there are many E-learning training programs that can be easily accessed through the online systems, one of them is the English language training program which is held by *UPT Bahasa* or the University Language Centre. The University Language Center generally provides programs that assist students in language learning. The University Language Center program is mostly followed by non-English department students to improve their proficiency based on their own awareness and desire. In this case the researcher wants to know their opinion on one of the programs called “General English for Students” program (GES) conducted online.

General English for Students program is intended for the learners who have already mastered basics English, such as; being able to introduce oneself and others, as well as being able to ask questions about other people, for example: where they live etc., this course aims to improve reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills for general purposes.

University Language Centre is a specialized technical implementation unit in the field of learning development and language services that support language learning throughout the university by providing several programs related to language training and testing. The certain programs held by the Language Centre in one of the universities in Tasikmalaya are; General English for Students, TOEFL Preparation, IELTS Preparation, Business English and Academic Writing, and the language testing organized by the Language Center is the TELP "Test of English Language Proficiency" which can revealed the score of the language learners' proficiency in English Language. Due to the pandemic situation that has stopped all direct teaching and learning activities, all programs organized by the Language Center have also been adapted by switching to online teaching or blended learning.

Blended learning has profited by utilizing both synchronous and asynchronous conveyance modes for its online segment to upgrade students' access and engagement. Butz & Stupnisky (2016) identified that synchronous delivery modes use a two-way or real-time technologies for example, videoconferencing framework to help learning that happens between at least two individuals or more at the same time, and asynchronous online learning interpreted as a type of discovering that takes into consideration for time-independent communication and reflection.

Previous studies have investigated students' perceptions of learning English online during the Covid-19 pandemic (Martina et al., 2020). This study used descriptive quantitative method, and the data were collected in the form of Google forms in regard to student perceptions of the application of online English learning, and this study shows that most students are interested in online learning, the data proves that the research respondents had positive perceptions of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Another study by Sabelina & Tiarina (2021) identified the students' perceptions about English learning material during online learning. This study used a descriptive quantitative method, and the results showed that students were neutral towards learning materials and the delivery of materials used during online learning. Moreover, they considered that the material used in online learning is more difficult than the material used in face-to-face classroom. This makes students unable to determine their perceptions of learning materials and delivery of materials during online learning. In addition, Irfan & Iman (2020) argue that online learning is ineffective and inappropriate. They show this by referring to several factors, such as inadequate internet facilities, the inability of teachers to carry out online learning, and the lack of cooperation provided by parents.

However, this present research was analyzed qualitatively, and focuses on the EFL students' perceptions toward E-learning English training programs held by University Language Center in one of the universities in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia.

Perception is the cognitive process that is used by the people to understand and interpret the world around them (Leathers, 1992). Perception plays a very vital role in education, especially in teaching and learning activities. Kleinke (1978) points out a perception is important for both teachers and students since it impacts the educating and learning process. The students will be able to become familiar with the materials if they comprehend their own perceptions well, if the students' perceptions have been revealed both positively and negatively, this can lead teachers and students to achieve some attention related to teaching techniques to get the best modification of teaching techniques so that the material is easily understood by students. By comprehending their own perception, they will acknowledge what they need and what instructing the media is helpful for them.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to understand students' perceptions deeper regarding their experience during the E-learning English program. The researcher selected one of the programs, namely "General English (GES)" in 2021 and conducted a qualitative research using an exploratory case study research method, which can be revealed by discovering how individuals get along in the setting under inquiry, what implications they provide for their activities, and what issues concern them.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

A research question addressed in the present study is "What are the EFL students' perceptions toward the General English E-Learning training programs held by a University Language Centre in one of the universities in Tasikmalaya?"

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to this study, as follows:

1.3.1 General English for Students (GES) : This program is intended for learners who have already mastered basics

English, such as; being able to introduce oneself and others, as well as being able to ask questions about other people, for example: where they live etc., this course aims to improve reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills for general purposes.

1.3.2 Students' Perceptions

: The students' perceptions is the process when the students' individually organize, interpret, and give meaning to the perceived information that comes from the learning environment.

1.3.3 E-Learning English Training Program

: The E-Learning English training program is an online planned English learning effort to facilitate learning and testing related to English knowledge, skills and behavior.

1.3.4 University Language Centre

: Language centre is a technical implementation unit in the field of learning development and language services that support language learning throughout the university by providing several programs related to language training and testing.

1.3.5 EFL Students

: EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language, all selected participants studied by the researcher in this present research were EFL students. They were Indonesian EFL learners who studied English in a non-English speaking country.

1.4 Aim of the Research

This study aims to explore the EFL students' perceptions toward the General English E-Learning training programs held by one of the University Language Centres in Indonesia.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical use : Theoretically, this present study advanced the relevant theories and also increased the existing knowledge about the EFL students' perceptions toward the General English E-Learning training program which would be very useful for further research sources.

1.5.2 Practical use : Practically, this present study contributed to the University Language Centre (*UPT Bahasa*) especially about the English language trainers' concerns on the learning effectiveness, such as the appropriate materials and techniques.

1.5.3 Empirical use : Empirically, this present study provided valuable information for the researcher about the EFL students' perceptions toward the General English E-Learning training program at one of the University language centres in Indonesia.