

EXPLORING ENGLISH LEARNERS' HOBBIES IN HELPING THEM LEARN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

Hobbies are considered important to be one of ways to help English Learners learn English independently. Many English learners do not understand yet things they can explore from their hobbies to help them learn English. Through this study the researcher attempts to explore English learners' activities when they do their hobbies and to find ideas from them about which part of those activities, they think can help them learn English. The findings show that some English learners taken from respondents can share quite well about activities from their hobbies that can help them learn English, but still many English learners from respondents do not really understand about the relationship of their hobbies with the process of learning English. This condition can be caused by some reasons and as Nezif (2015) says, "It is obvious that there are many challenges in implementing independent learning. The challenges are lack of using authentic materials, a teacher centered approach, lack of learning goals, lack of confidence, high dependence on teachers, lack of practice in self-assessment and peer assessment and lack of interest and lack of learning strategies." The researcher agrees with Nezif that the challenges are real and by having this study, the researcher tries to figure out what can be planned better for the future to help English learners learn English through their hobbies.

Introduction

Realizing that English is still one of important language needed to learn by language learners as one communicative language in the world, many schools and higher education institutions in Indonesia put English as one compulsory subject in the curriculum, one of the institutions is the institute where the writer teaches. As a teacher the writer also believes that English learners especially when they get older, they need to be able to learn lots of things, including English independently where they have their own responsibility to have and manage their own place to learn outside their classroom at school. As stated by Alrabai (2017) that "The world is

currently heading toward a new educational horizon in which the primary issue involves preparing students to bear responsibility for their own in-class learning as well as for life-long learning beyond the borders of the classroom.” The writer as the teacher of English has the intention and willingness to always try the best to help her students to learn English, especially learning English more effectively, actively, and independently because the writer believes her students can do much better to improve their English independently, but they do not know how to do it. Paying attention to this condition there are always questions about how a teacher can help English learners learn English and inspire them so that they can learn English more effectively, actively, and independently in their life especially when they are not in the classroom. Moreover, the writer feels optimistic that teachers can guide English learner to learn English independently. With a good guidance from teachers learning English independently can be done better, as stated by Herbiar and Nelson Herbiar (1987) in Ibrahim (2015) that, “Students' independence in learning is developed by plan, not by chance. Teachers can help students to improve their learning by understanding the reasons why students have not been successful, identifying strategies that promote active participation in the learning process, and teaching students how to become more responsible for their own learning. Ultimately, students become independent learners when they plan, monitor apply, and evaluate their own learning processes by themselves,”

The writer still sees that the experiences of learning English which Indonesian kids get at their school seem not enough for making them able to understand English well, let alone to use or apply it the real communication, even in informal situation. The fact shows that those who are well at communicating in English are mostly spending their study time at international schools or local private schools adopting system from abroad. Meanwhile there are still many of English learners the writer met in classroom having difficulty in dealing with English they learn and informal English they use to communicate.

The situation of having those English learners, who are not able to understand or to use English is considered as a challenge for the writer to help English learners of any levels. From the challenge there are three research objectives that the writer has in this research, the first is the writer would like to get the information about hobbies owned or done by those English learners. The second purpose is to explore more which hobbies considered can help English learners better in improving their English. The last purpose is to find more about activities in the learners' hobbies that can help them learn or practice English better. By having the findings and the results of analysis the writer believes there will be some beneficial contribution the writer can share to future English learner to try hobbies which will also be fruitful for them who want to learn English through hobbies. The writer believes by showing English learners which hobbies can contribute more for their English, they can try to have do more those hobbies and use those hobbies too to help them learn English. The writer expects by learning through hobbies English will be more interesting to

be learnt compared if the learners learn it through other ways they do not really like or enjoy.

The idea of motivating the learners to be more independent in studying English because the writer believe English learners have longer spare time while they are not in their classroom at schools and in this spare times they are expected to be able to use their time to study independently. Quoted by Higher Education Academy (2014), Candy, in the now classic text 'Self-direction for lifelong learning' (1991), quotes Forster (1972) to define independent learning/ study: "1 'Independent study is a process, a method and a philosophy of education: in which a student acquires knowledge by his or her own efforts and develops the ability for inquiry and critical evaluation; 2 it includes freedom of choice in determining those objectives, within the limits of a given project or program and with the aid of a faculty adviser; 3 it requires freedom of process to carry out the objectives; 4 it places increased educational responsibility on the student for the achieving of objectives and for the value of the goals'. Meanwhile Meyer, Haywood, Sachdev and Faraday (2008) said that Independent learning is often linked with other approaches to learning such as 'personalization', 'student-centred learning', and 'ownership' of learning. Discussion of independent learning frequently arises in the context of important issues such as a student teacher roles and relationship, and the role of information and communications technology (ICT) in learning.

These definitions clearly place the responsibility for learning in higher education on students, aided by teaching staff and defined by the limits and objectives of the programme, helped or facilitated by the role of information and communication technology too. From this explanation the writer sees that English learners can use the independent study process to gain more English knowledge as broad as the want. They can choose the topics of learning materials by themselves. Moreover if they have more energy and time they will be able to learn with longer duration of time, not like the one in their class, limited by systems and the time is also managed by the management. Therefore English learners will have more freedom to learn anything they like and want, they can even create their own plan and target when they learn English independently. Of course, they will need supports from the people around them to decide their methods and to motivate them in running the learning plans because here the learners will be responsible for themselves not for school or anyone else around them. Because English learners vary from those whose level of English skill is low, until those who are very good already at English, some of English learners still need to be helped by their teachers or school staff to develop their independent study plan, including goals and steps. The writer even thinks the learners can be helped to decide which hobbies that will be beneficial for them since earlier ages if it is possible because the writer believes that hobbies are not only for fun but also can be for getting fruitful things. Besides good hobbies can help English learners to have well-being conditions in their life, as stated by Vuletic and Kernjaic (2019) that ... the more adolescents engage in hobbies the more positive well-being aspects are expressed and diverse well-being experiences established within different hobbies. Hence the writer believes talking hobbies will be also related with English learners' achievement in learning English.

Moreover the reason why the writer thinks that English learners need to be able to learn English independent learners not only because learning independently will enrich them with English but also being independent learners can help them be more confident in managing and controlling their leaning patterns, British Council on their website (2022) mentioned that Children who are more independent learners tend to have more self-confidence and have a greater sense that they are in control of their learning. In one research conducted by Agustina and Fajar (2019) it was found that students students felt the advantages of learning the language independently without the presence of the teacher. That research result shows how becoming independent learners can build them be more confident including in doing or running their learning process.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The study was started from the idea the writer had that actually hobbies are one of ways than can be very helpful for learners to learn English. But the writer realized that there were still many English learners did not know and understand how they could improve their English through their hobbies. The writer saw many English learners had no idea how their hobbies can be used as one of the media to help them learn English. From this idea the writer tried to create research involving her students who are English learners to dig information and do observation by having their stories about their hobbies and activities with their hobbies that actually can help them improve their English.

The research itself was done by a simple survey using the data gotten from her English learners as the subjects of the research. Data were collected from English learners' essays. The writer got the data by asking the learners to write an essay about their hobbies, what they usually do with their hobbies, what kind of English materials they can learn from having the hobbies and what activities they do with your hobbies to help them learn English. After the data collected from the learners the writers wrote down manually all hobbies the learners have, their ideas about their hobbies and the relationship between their hobbies and the process of learning English. When they think they can use their hobbies for learning English they would write activities they do to learn English with their hobbies and the kinds of skills they think they can improve through those activities. The analysis is a qualitative analysis where the writer got all the results from the data to find things to answer the problems of the research. English learners' stories shared through their essays are compiled and the data related with the study are used to be gathered as conclusion of the study that later can help other English learners cope with their same hobbies to learn English independently.

From all hobbies written by English learners in their essay the writer separates them into two parts, the first are those hobbies that the writer thinks can help English learners a lot to improve their English and the later are hobbies which the writer see not having quite significant contributions to English learners' skills improvement,

and the focus of this research is the first one. The process of compiling the data has been done manually and analysed one by one directly by the writer herself, therefore this research is using descriptive qualitative methodology. There the writer describes the findings (data) and analyse them manually to get the ideas for getting to the objectives of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the data

There are 20 hobbies mentioned by English learners as their hobbies. The 20 hobbies are 1. listening to music/songs, 2. watching films, 3. watching foreign YouTuber' videos, 4. playing basketball, 5. singing, 6. playing games, 7. traveling/exploring good places, 8. playing and watching badminton, 9. cooking and watching cooking channels on YouTube, 10. reading books/comics/novels, 11. dancing, 12. meeting/socializing with new people, 13. playing and watching football/futsal, 14. swimming, 15. writing diary, 16. photography, 17. cycling, 18. drawing/painting, 19. playing musical instrument, and 20. designing.

From those 20 hobbies mentioned by English learners in their stories, there are only 8 hobbies which can be explained by them that the activities could help them learn English. Those hobbies are 1. listening to music/songs, 2. watching films, 3. watching foreign YouTubers' videos, 4. playing games, 5. reading novels or comics, 6. cooking and watching cooking channels on YouTube, 7. playing and watching football/futsal, 8. writing diary. Other 12 hobbies cannot be elaborated by English learners to give ideas how they could use those hobbies to learn English. Therefore, the writer decides to explain the activities done only from these 8 hobbies.

Activities Done by English Learners with Their Hobbies to Help Them Learn English

Listening to Music/Songs

English learners said when they were listening to music, or they meant songs here, they usually listened the songs and repeated listening to practice their listening skills, by listening they could learn new vocabularies, they practise more how to pronounce words better and from the written lyrics they could learn how to spell words from the songs. Sometimes they also wrote the lyrics, so they could practise their writing skills, well at least writing words by using correct spellings, and the last one they were able to practise their understanding too by reading the lyrics and messages sent through the lyrics. These activities done by English learners are common things to do by anyone but not many people realize that doing those activities more seriously will help them learn English through things they like or interested to.

Watching Films

As technology has developed much recently and the platforms or applications to watch films have been mushrooming no wonder many English learners also mentioned that they liked watching films a lot. Many of respondents said that watching films could help them practise their listening skills. Listening to the dialogues in the film especially if the film is drama, English learners will have longer dialogue to listen to. By doing this listening activity English learners can also learn accents, either American accent or other accents depend on the genre of film they watch. The dialogue they watch will make them more knowledgeable about how to pronounce words better, they even can practise pronouncing directly by repeating listening to the dialogues. Besides they usually also get new vocabularies from the dialogues they listen to or the English subtitle they read. Some English learners said they liked to write down new words they got from the films together with the meanings that they already found in the dictionary. Therefore, it can be said that the motivation for them to learn English through films have been owned by themselves since they started to pay attention to the English words used in the films. Moreover, most of English learners with this hobby like to practise the speaking skills by imitating and repeating dialogues in the films. This activity where they imitate expression from the films will help them practise their skill of speaking because by expressing their ideas by using expressions, they imitate from the films will enrich their ability at speaking English. Finally, the last activity explained is considered one the best activities that English learners can do to help them learn English through films hobby.

Watching foreign YouTubers' videos

Watching foreign YouTubers' videos have become one of the most popular activities among done by people in the world nowadays, moreover this one also chosen by respondents when they were asked about their hobbies. The respondents, English learners involved in this research said that when they watched and listened to the YouTubers, specifically those foreign YouTubers who speak English, English learners were able to learned specific English skills like grammar skill from YouTubers who use their accounts to share their teaching contents. This kind of Youtuber who likes sharing their knowledge about foreign language through their videos become one of those popular accounts among language learners because English learners can spend time longer than they get in formal classes either at schools or English courses. Besides those YouTubers who teach through their channels, there are also other channels have contents in English in forms of talk shows and adventure videos narrated in English. These different videos from many YouTubers become ones of the most interesting ways to be watched by English learners and be used to learn English. Furthermore, English learners are also able to learn sentences and expressions from comments written on the comment box provided on each video shared on YouTube channels. This is very interesting because the idea of reading comments done by respondents, the English learners is not a common idea done by many people, but it could be tried by anyone to help them learn vocabularies

and expressions in English. Even this idea of paying attention to the comments is something unique because English learners will see the original expressions coming from ordinary people that usually spontaneously given as their comments on YouTubers.

Playing Games

Playing games is usually done by those male English learners, who said that they could use their playing games hobby to help them practise speaking English with other foreign gamers online because kinds of games they played were online games produced by foreign companies, used English as the program language and the games were commonly played by gamers from all around the world. This condition makes the gamers be pushed to use English as their communication language during their time while playing these online games. Not only the English learners actively speak English but also, they practise a lot their listening skill because to communicate normally people listen first to other people's expressions than they continue by speaking to respond the expressions sent.

By listening and speaking with other gamers English learners would learn many new words and more various expressions from texts in the box of messages and from gamers who played with them.

Reading Novels or Comics

Not many English learners involved in this research liked reading, either reading fictions of not fictions, but they who liked reading said that the liked reading novels or comics. By reading novels or comics they could practise their reading skills, practise writing words better because they could see how words correctly spelled and used in such specific grammar patterns. Reading novels or comics were also used by the English learners to get to know new words and expressions with their meanings because the words and expressions used in specific context, sometimes they said they also read the dialogues loudly so they could practise pronouncing the words in expressions and they imitated the expressions in the dialogues to be used in their real life.

Cooking and Watching Cooking Channels on YouTube

Cooking and watching cooking channels on YouTube are two different activities that are usually done by them who like cooking, including English learners in this research. They said through their cooking hobbies they could learn new vocabularies from recipe they read and tried, additionally they also got the vocabularies from video they watched on YouTube which showed them cooking practice done by YouTubers. Besides they could also learn new expressions from the presentation of the YouTubers while they were demonstrating their cooking activities.

Playing and Watching Football/Futsal

Only very small numbers of respondents, the English learners in this research who mentioned playing football or futsal as their hobbies, but still they said they

were able to use those activities to help them learned English. The activities which made them to learn English by having the hobbies are the speaking activity with players and coaches from other countries who usually practise together with them, moreover they also could learn English from videos about football or from articles on the media which talked about football or futsal in general and those specifically written during season of football matches.

Writing Diary

Writing diary is one important hobby that could help English learners a lot especially to sharpen their writing skills and enriching their vocabularies, it was said also by English learners who got involved in this research, they said they were able to learn new words when they wrote their diaries in English because not all words they wanted to write they already knew, many times they needed to check the English words they need to write as the translations from the Indonesian versions. In addition they absolutely could learn and practise their writing skills since the words they have need to be arranged into right patterns.

CONCLUSION

Having the results of the research the writer sees there were many hobbies owned by English learners, in this research the writer found 20 different hobbies from all ideas shared by respondents, however from 20 hobbies there were only 8 hobbies can be explored and used by English learners to help them learned English independently. The 8 hobbies which were considered so interesting that English learners could use them to help English learners learned English were 1. listening to music/songs, 2. watching films, 3. watching foreign YouTubers' videos, 4. playing games, 5. reading novels or comics, 6. cooking and watching cooking channels on YouTube, 7. playing and watching football/futsal, 8. writing diary. Each hobby has some activities which can be done or run by English learners to help them learn English therefore English learners anywhere can imitate and do the same things as English learners involved in this research to help them as English learners able to learn English independently. English learners are suggested find their interests that can be done as their hobbies to ease them learn English through their own hobbies. The writer also suggests English teachers to motivate the English learners in their classroom to start trying to use their hobbies to learn English independently. The writer believes by helping them explore their hobbies, English learners are also helped to learn how to do learning process independently.

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