

LECTURERS' PERCEPTIONS OF EFL READING BASED ON ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION IN RIAU UNIVERSITIES – INDONESIA

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are: 1) to investigate the level of university lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading in Riau and 2) to determine whether there is a significant difference in university lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading based on their academic qualifications. The implemented research design is descriptive method and the data were analysed using percentage, mean, median, and chi-square, Kruskal Wallis, and Mann Whitney U. The population of this research was all lecturers teaching EFL reading in Riau province. The sampling technique applied was total sampling and the number of respondents is 97. The research finding has revealed that the lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading is at high level (4.25) and there is significant difference in lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading between Master's qualification and degree qualification with Mann Whitney value = 711.000 and sig = 0.015 ($p < 0.05$). Master's qualification has a higher mean than degree qualification.

Keywords: EFL reading, academic qualification

1. Background of the Study

Indeed, Indonesia university lecturers have problematic circumstances specifically dealing with their academic matters. They have abundant responsibilities such as performing works on conducting and publishing their research, preparing and administrating teaching activities of their subjects, and have to carry out community services and at the same time they are obligated to upgrade professional development by taking part in various trainings, workshops, and continuing their education. However, current phenomenon on lecturers, in fact their academic qualifications are crucial matter as this country has insufficient number of qualified lecturers as it should be (Jakarta Post, 2017). Viewing a decade ago, lecturers' certification program has been implemented under the law of teachers and lecturers since 2008 (refers to UU RI No. 14/2005). Based on this mandated law, a lecturer should (a) hold at least a master's degree. Based on data from June 2008, among 138,290 lecturers at state or private institutions, 80,239 have an S1 qualification (bachelor's degree), meaning that this amount of lecturers will not be able to fulfill this legal requirement. To solve this, Indonesia Research & Technology and Higher Education Ministry has initiated a scholarship scheme for up-grading their education to a master's degree. In accordance to the year 2017 ministry data, it showed that 34,393 lecturers hold bachelor's degree and 25,000 of them with a doctorate degree and 5,000 short of the government's desired amount. Even though there is an increase of lecturers' qualifications in recent years, however, lecturers whose qualification are in bachelor degree are still there and these perhaps will have an effect towards their works performance as discussed earlier in the universities.

Research Questions: 1) What is the level of university lecturers' perceptions of EFL Reading in Riau?; 2) Is there significant difference in university lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading based on their academic qualifications?

2. Literature Review

According to Hall and Verpaetse (2000) much of process of language learning occurs in classroom through planned activities in the classroom. Classroom interaction facilitates learners to achieve their practical application of academic knowledge in the class. This is why the roles of teachers or lecturers and curriculum in English language teaching are the sources of success in English learning in Indonesia. Brown (1991) has stated that classroom interaction would give non-native learners a

change to practice their English, improving their structural automaticity, and thereby enabling them to have better fluency in English.

In line with EFL learning, in fact, it is undeniable that the professional educators, for instances, teachers and lecturers' roles are significant to facilitate their students to reach high level of achievement in their English language proficiency (Maende 2018; Safiah Osman 1992). Nunan (1988) states, these professionals are the agents of curriculum development. It is irrefutable that students' attain high levels of achievement in their English language learning are due to the contributions of their lecturers and their lecturers' commitment in pursuing quality education. This is also supported by UNESCO (2017) that teacher professional development contributes a significant role in education sector.

Ricarda et al. (2018) have ascertained that academic achievement in which including academic qualification, this represents performance outcomes that shows the extent to which an individual has obtained specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environment—specially in school, college, and university. Besides, Eid (2014) underpins that quality teacher education is believed as the most crucial factor for improving educational outcomes for students. Thus increasing academic requirements for higher level of learning require better qualified teacher and lecturers.

2.1 Reading Models

There are three reading models/strategies/processes existed so far: top-down (TD), bottom-up (BU), and interactive which are commonly practiced by readers. Reading models have been accepted and adopted as clear explanations of the meaning comes to transform from printed words to clear concepts in the minds of readers (Nooreiny, 1998). Then the choices of strategies applied are commonly determined by the level of readers in reading EFL.

TD is a common strategy practiced by skillful readers and implementing model involves readers' knowledge and its comprehension deriving from higher-level conceptual knowledge structure (schemata). Readers who implement this method will analyze the whole text, analyzing the different facets of meaning through advanced learning strategies, some of TD processes includes the higher level skills, for instance, predicting meaning of the words by utilizing context clues or certain kinds of background knowledge (Eskey, 1988). In addition some of other skills in TD are summarizing (e.g. the skills of distinguishing between the main idea and subordinate ideas), drawing inferences, and making judgements (Bensoussan and Kreindler, 1990).

Interactive model of reading adapts both TD and BU methods and this process refers to the overlapping both MMS and McMS as both micro and macro-meaning search (Nooreiny, 1998). In this instance, readers search for meaning may be blocked by the presence of low frequency words or new technical jargon specific to certain disciplines. Hence, readers who have no idea in their previous knowledge to ascertain this word, then will definitely apply the BU strategy and will use dictionary.

3. Methodology

The research design used is descriptive and descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were implemented to find out the level of university lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading. Statistical tests used were chi-square, Kruskal Wallis, Mann Whitney U to determine the differences in university lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading.

A total of 97 EFL lecturers teaching at eight universities in Riau province had responded to the survey questionnaire (a return rate of 90%) and these lecturers work at two public and six private universities. The Public Universities are Universitas Riau and Universitas Islam Negeri SUSQA and Private University consists of Universitas Islam Riau, Universitas Lancang Kuning, Universitas Muhammadiyah, Universitas Rab, Universitas Pasir Pengaraian and Universitas Indragiri.

This questionnaire instrument was self-developed and had been measured its validity and reliability. The use of Cronbach Alpha is appropriate in testing reliability and validity as the data were collected using Likert scale is linear (Alias 1992). The Alpha Value after piloting this instrument is 0.850 with 12 items. To determine the content validity of this research instruments, two senior lecturers with expertise in EFL methodology helped validating the content and the constructs of the instrument. This instrument had been tried-out with thirty respondents at two universities. Content validity refers to the degree to which a test measures an intended content area (Gay and Airasian 2000). Thus, ambiguities and vague questions were rephrased for clarity and changes and improvements were made.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Level of University Lecturers' Perception on EFL Reading in Riau Province

Descriptive analysis such as frequencies, percentages and means were conducted to determine the level of university lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading in Riau province. Descriptive analysis of the results is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Level of lecturers' perceptions of EFL Reading

No	Statement	SD	D	UN	A	SA	Mean	Interpretation
1.	Comprehension of EFL readers in reading is supported by cultural information of the language.	2 (2.1%)	4 (4.1%)	16 (16.5)	48 (49.5)	27 (27.8)	3.97	High
2.	EFL readers need to comprehend the cultural aspects of the language.	2 (2.1%)	-	15 (15.5)	51 (52.6)	29 (29.9)	4.08	High
3.	EFL reading needs linguistic knowledge of the language.	-	3 (3.1%)	6 (6.2%)	51 (52.6)	37 (38.1)	4.26	High
4.	I think reading in English is useful to help students understand academic textbooks.	1 (1.0%)	-	6 (6.2%)	44 (45.4)	46 (47.4)	4.38	High
5.	I believe that reading in English helps one in using ICT.	1 (1.0%)	-	6 (6.2%)	56 (57.7)	34 (35.1)	4.27	High
6.	Reading in English helps lifelong learning.	1 (1.0%)	5 (5.2%)	19 (19.6)	38 (39.2)	34 (35.1)	4.02	High
7.	My knowledge about the topic of the text is important.	-	1 (1.0%)	3 (3.1%)	49 (50.5)	44 (45.4)	4.40	High
8.	I use my vocabulary knowledge of English to support my reading in English.	-	1 (1.0%)	6 (6.2%)	41 (42.3)	49 (50.5)	4.42	High
9.	Reading is a decoding process of reconstructing meaning via printed letters, words, sentences, and text.	-	3 (3.1%)	4 (4.1%)	46 (47.4)	44 (45.4)	4.35	High

10.	An aspect of reading is discerning the text and how to put coherent stretch of its text discourse.	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	6 (6.2%)	51 (52.6)	38 (39.2)	4.28	High
11.	EFL reading ability supports other English language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing.	-	3 (3.1%)	7 (7.2%)	48 (49.5)	39 (40.2)	4.27	High
12.	To be a good EFL reader, someone has to have good reading habits.	-	1 (1.0%)	12 (12.4)	42 (43.3)	42 (43.3)	4.29	High
Total							4.25	High

Table 1 shows that every item in the lecturers' perception on EFL reading is high. The item with the highest mean is "I use my vocabulary knowledge of English to support my reading in English" (mean = 4.42). In terms of frequency and percentage, a total of 49 lecturers (50.5%) strongly agree, 41 (42.3%) agree, 6 (6.2%) were undecided and 1 (1.0%) disagreed. The item with the lowest mean is 'Comprehension of EFL readers in reading is supported by cultural information of the language' (mean = 3.97). In terms of frequency and percentage a total of 31 lecturers (48.0%) agree, 27 (27.8%) strongly agreed, 16 (16.5%) were undecided, 4 (4.1%) disagreed and 2 (2.0%) strongly agreed. On the whole, the lecturers' perception of EFL reading is of a high level (4.25).

Generally, from twelve items analyzed in the level of lecturers' perceptions of EFL Reading responded by the respondents, their mean score is high (4.25) and this interprets that all of these items for the university lecturers are treated important aspects for comprehending EFL reading. The dominant aspects considered crucial among others are the important of vocabulary mastery, previous lecturers' knowledge in relation to the text topic, decoding process of reconstructing meaning of texts via printed starting from printed letters, words, sentences, to texts. These aspects are useful when they deal with EFL reading texts.

Besides, the importance of having good reading habit, an aspect of discerning the text and has to put coherent stretch of its text discourse, the need of linguistic knowledge to support EFL reading comprehension, and the needs of an understanding the culture of this language are other determinant factors in EFL reading. The comprehension of vocabulary in context, indeed, is useful

to avoid obstacles in reading comprehension (Acheta, 2018; Pattahuddin and Saidna, 2017; Wahiba Babaiba Medjahdi, 2015).

4.2 Difference in Lecturer’s Perceptions of EFL Reading Based on Academic Qualification

Kruskal Wallis test was conducted to determine differences in lecturers’ perceptions of EFL reading based on their qualification. Kruskal Wallis test results are as follows.

Table 2 Kruskal Wallis test of differences in lecturer’s perceptions of EFL reading based on qualification

Qualification	N	Mean Chi			
		Rank	Square	Df	Sig.
PhD	7	44.50	6.182	2	0.045
Master	47	56.28			
Degree	43	41.78			

Table 2 shows that there is significant difference in lecturers’ perceptions of EFL reading based on qualification with Chi Square value = 6.182 and sig = 0.045 ($p < 0.05$). The mean point shows Master’s qualification (mean rank = 56.28) has a higher mean than PhD (mean rank = 44.50) and Degree qualification (mean rank = 41.78). The difference can be shown in more detail using the Mann Whitney test as follows.

Table 3 Mann Whitney U differences in lecturers’ perceptions of EFL reading based on qualification

Qualification	N	Sum of Mann			Sig.
		Mean Rank	Ranks	Whitney U	
PhD	7	21.43	150.00	122.000	0.272
Master	47	28.40	1335.00		

Qualification	N	Sum of Mann			Sig.
		Mean Rank	Ranks	Whitney U	
PhD	7	21.43	150.00	122.000	0.272
Master	47	28.40	1335.00		
PhD	7	27.07	189.50	139.500	0.757
Degree	43	25.24	1085.50		
Master	47	51.87	2438.00	711.000	0.015
Degree	43	38.53	1657.00		

Table 3 shows that there is significant difference in lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading between Master's qualification and degree qualification with Mann Whitney value = 711.000 and sig = 0.015 ($p < 0.05$). Master's qualification has a higher mean than degree qualification.

It has confirmed that there is significant difference in lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading, between master's qualification and degree qualification in particular. This is advocated by Maende (2018) and Safiah Osman (1992) that lecturers' roles are significant to facilitate their students to reach high level of achievement in their English language proficiency, included reading in EFL.

5. Conclusion and Implication

The research finding has revealed that the lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading is at high level (4.25) and there is significant difference in lecturers' perceptions of EFL reading between Master's qualification and degree qualification with Mann Whitney value = 711.000 and sig = 0.015 ($p < 0.05$). Master's qualification has a higher mean than degree qualification.

So it is recommended that the lecturers who teach EFL reading to have academic opportunity to develop their professional growth through relevant EFL training needed in this 21st century. For an illustration, by providing interactive learning modes, blended learning will provide their learners to have skills and get used to be independent learners and know how to shape their needed skills in EFL context, particularly in EFL reading. Continuing education for the lecturers to higher level degree, this will also have significant effect for them to provide better quality work in higher education through qualified teaching, research and social community contribution.

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