Research Article

An Exploration of EFL Student's Expectation in English Department

Tanti Aprinia ¹*, Rahmat Setiawan ²

¹   Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya; e-mail : tantiaprnnn@gmail.com
²   Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya; e-mail : rahmatsetiawan@unipasby.ac.id
*   Corresponding Author : Tanti Aprinia

Abstract: This study examines the gap between students' expectations and the reality of their learning experience in an EFL university setting. While students anticipate adequate facilities, a well-structured curriculum, and a supportive English-speaking environment, they often face inadequate resources, curriculum mismatches, and limited immersion. This disparity affects motivation, academic performance, and language proficiency. By identifying these gaps, the study offers insights for improving teaching strategies, curriculum development, and the overall EFL learning environment. This qualitative case study explores the gap between students' expectations and the reality of EFL learning in the English Education Department. Semi-structured interviews with three students from different academic levels provide diverse perspectives. Thematic analysis identifies key discrepancies in facilities, curriculum relevance, and the English-speaking environment. Expert validation ensures the validity of interview questions. Findings highlight the need for institutional improvements to enhance students' learning experiences. This study explores the gap between English Education students' expectations and reality, impacting their learning. Key issues include inadequate facilities, a theory-heavy curriculum, and a lack of English use in daily communication, leading to reduced motivation and proficiency. Institutions must improve facilities, balance theory with practice, and foster an English-speaking environment to better prepare future educators.

Keywords: EFL Students, Expectations vs. Reality, English Department, Facilities, Learning Environment.

1. Introduction

The transition from high school to university presents a significant shift in academic expectations, social environments, and personal responsibilities for students worldwide. This transition can be particularly challenging for students enrolled in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program, as they often anticipate a highly immersive and supportive English-learning environment. Many EFL students enter university with the expectation that they will be surrounded by English in both academic and social settings, fostering an environment conducive to rapid language acquisition and professional development. They also expect structured curricula designed to prepare them for their future careers, along with adequate educational facilities that support an optimal learning experience. However, discrepancies between students' expectations and their actual experiences often emerge, leading to potential impacts on their motivation, engagement, and overall academic performance.

This article discusses the phenomenon of how students feel expectations when entering college are different from what they expect or get so that the event becomes a problem that will be researched in this study. The importance of this research is because one of the factors that supports success is motivation. motivation is influenced by expectations so that unmet expectations will cause many adverse effects on the learning process, one of which is not developing their English language skills. Understanding these gaps between expectation and reality is crucial for educators, administrators, and policymakers in higher education. When students find that their anticipated immersive environment is not realized—such as when

native languages dominate communication in classrooms and among peers—they may experience frustration and a sense of disillusionment. Similarly, when courses fail to align with students' career aspirations, motivation can diminish. Additionally, inadequate facilities, such as outdated learning resources and limited study spaces, can hinder students' ability to perform optimally.

This study explores these mismatches in the English Department of a university setting, focusing on three key aspects: facilities, learning environment, and curriculum. Through an in-depth qualitative analysis, this research seeks to shed light on the challenges faced by EFL students and provide recommendations for improving educational infrastructure and curriculum design to better align with student expectations.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

a. EFL Student Expectations and Challenges in Higher Education

The expectations of EFL students regarding university-level education have been widely studied. The transition from school to university is an incredibly significant period of change, it affects students' ability to adapt, and succeeding is identified [1]. In the environment of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, understanding students' expectations plays a crucial role in shaping effective teaching strategies and curricular design. This assumption is rooted in theories of second-language acquisition, which emphasize the importance of input and interaction in language learning. However, the use of students' native language remains prevalent in classroom discussions, social interactions, and even instructional materials, leading to lower levels of engagement in English. Furthermore, there is a mismatch between the student's evaluation and experience, as well as the student's evaluation and the lecturer, which may be detrimental to the student's transition [1].

Another significant area of expectation pertains to the structure and relevance of university curricula. Motivation plays a crucial role in second-language learning, and curriculum design directly influences student motivation. EFL students typically expect that courses will be tailored to enhance their language proficiency while simultaneously equipping them with professional skills for their future careers, particularly in education.

b. The Role of Educational Facilities in Language Learning

Educational infrastructure significantly impacts the effectiveness of language learning. Learning resources, technological tools, and study spaces contribute to students' ability to practice and develop their language skills. Indicators of learning facilities are Learning space or right, learning furniture, learning aids and learning resources [2]. With adequate facilities, teachers can develop more innovative and interactive learning methods. In many developing countries, universities struggle with outdated materials, insufficient digital access, and overcrowded classrooms, which can hinder effective language acquisition. Incorporating digital platforms and modernized facilities can bridge this gap by enhancing students' access to English-language content and interactive learning methods. Despite evidence supporting the necessity of well-equipped learning environments, many universities fail to meet these standards due to budgetary constraints and administrative priorities. The disparity between students' expectations of a resource-rich academic environment and the reality of limited institutional support has been noted; such discrepancies contribute to declining student satisfaction and increased dropout rates in EFL programs.

c. Bridging the Gap: Policy and Pedagogical Implications

Addressing the gap between EFL students' expectations and realities requires a multifaceted approach involving curriculum reform, institutional policy adjustments, and pedagogical innovations. Universities should prioritize student-centered learning experiences, integrating real-world applications into language education. Additionally, promoting an English-speaking culture through campus-wide initiatives, extracurricular activities, and digital engagement can help reinforce language immersion. Furthermore, policy changes emphasizing faculty training and infrastructure development can create a more supportive learning environment for EFL students [3]. Without adequate support, students may feel less motivated to learn and use English outside the classroom. Parents' involvement in their child's learning process is crucial to building students' confidence and interest in English. A mismatch in this support can widen the gap between students' abilities and learning expectations.

d. Research Contribution and Study Rationale

Although previous research has explored various aspects of EFL education, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies examining the misalignment between student expectations and actual experiences within English Departments, particularly concerning facilities, learning environments, and curricula. This study aims to bridge this gap by providing qualitative insights into student perspectives and proposing actionable recommendations for universities to enhance the EFL learning experience. By addressing these issues, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on language education and student satisfaction, informing policies that foster a more effective and engaging academic environment for EFL students.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the expectations that do not match the reality in the English language education environment for students?

2. What are the consequences of unfulfilled expectations of the EFL students?

By addressing these questions, the research aims to offer insights that can guide university administrators and educators in refining their approaches to EFL instruction, ensuring a more effective and supportive learning environment.

3. Proposed Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore EFL students' unmet expectations and how these mismatches occur. The qualitative design allowed for a deep understanding of participants' experiences and the contextual factors influencing their learning. A case study was suitable for examining the specific and detailed experiences of each participant, offering rich, contextualized insights into the impact of expectations on the learning process. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with three English Education students from Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, currently in semesters 4, 6, and 8. Participants were selected based on relevance, openness, demographic characteristics, and the diversity of perspectives. They shared similar backgrounds in facing barriers to English learning, which helped control external variables. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and served as the primary data source. Semi-structured interviews provided both guidance and flexibility, allowing the researcher to explore participants' perspectives in depth. Interviews were conducted in person or online, with audio recordings and notes used to document both verbal responses and nonverbal cues. The interview questions were validated by two experts through peer debriefing to ensure they aligned with the research objectives. Transcriptions were then reduced and categorized according to the problem formulation. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving six steps: familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, definition and naming of themes, and report writing. This method allowed for the identification and interpretation of key patterns in the data. To ensure validity, expert validation was applied, with two experienced academics reviewing the interview instruments to confirm their accuracy and relevance in measuring EFL students' expectations. This process minimized bias and strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings. The study assumes that students' expectations often do not align with reality, particularly in three areas: inadequate facilities, an unsupportive curriculum, and a limited English-speaking environment. Students expected more English use, better resources, and curriculum relevance to their future careers. These mismatches led to decreased motivation, frustration, and academic stress. Addressing these issues requires curriculum reform, improved facilities, and a more supportive English-learning environment.

4. Results and Discussion

Result

This can result in decreased focus, procrastination, or even giving up, affecting academic achievement and graduation time. The S.A. also emphasizes the importance of creating realistic expectations and support from the surrounding environment, such as friends, family, and educators, to help students stay motivated and achieve their learning goals to the fullest. To conclude the results, it can be drawn that the unfulfilled expectations are: 1) facilities that do not meet, 2) curriculum that is not suitable, and 3) environment that is not supportive. And about the consequences there are two, namely, 1) a decrease in motivation to learn English, 2) the English ability will decrease.

Discussion

This section contains discussions or analyses that have been found from the results found there are 2 aspects that are the most important, namely unfulfilled expectations and their consequences. In terms of unfulfilled expectations there are 3 aspects that affect. Expectations in English language learning at the university level are not fully aligned with student expectations [4]. Universities may place more emphasis on academic aspects, such as grammar mastery and essay writing skills, while students often want more practical learning and focus on everyday communication. These differences in perspectives can create gaps between the curriculum offered, facilities, and the real needs of students in developing their English skills [5]. As a result, their English language skills are not developing optimally, even though these skills are essential for their academic success and future careers. The three aspects that are not in accordance with reality include:

a. Lack of Adequate Facilities

The insufficient facilities in English Education programs significantly hinder students' language learning and competency development. The absence of language labs, discussion rooms, and learning resource centers limits opportunities for authentic language practice, affecting speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, one of the most pronounced impacts is the limited opportunities for students to practice English directly [6]. Limited access to multimedia tools and diverse learning resources also reduces engagement, making it difficult for students to acquire vocabulary, grasp grammatical structures, and develop communication skills effectively. Without dedicated spaces for practice, students struggle to improve fluency and confidence. Many come from non-English-speaking backgrounds and lack opportunities for real-world interaction, increasing the risk of developing incorrect language habits. Additionally, inadequate facilities reduce student motivation, leading to disengagement and lower academic performance. Despite these challenges, students can adapt by using technology, forming study groups, and seeking alternative learning [7]. However, without proper institutional support, achieving optimal proficiency remains difficult.

b. Inappropriate Curriculum

An inappropriate English education curriculum can hinder students' competency development and career readiness by overemphasizing theory while neglecting practical language skills, 21st-century competencies, and relevant teaching methodologies work [8]. Curriculum often places too much emphasis on linguistic and grammatical theory, while authentic speaking and listening practices receive less attention. Outdated, rigid curricula that fail to align with students' interests and job market demands can reduce motivation, increase academic stress, and limit innovation in teaching. Monotonous methods and a lack of firsthand teaching practice further weaken graduates' preparedness. To address this, institutions should involve students in curriculum design, incorporate flexible electives, enhance lecturer training, and integrate digital tools to ensure a dynamic, relevant, and inspiring learning experience.

c. Lack of Supportive Aspects in Terms of the Environment

English Language Education students often struggle due to a lack of a conducive English-speaking environment, especially in universities outside major cities [9]. Limited opportunities to practice English, reliance on regional languages, and a lack of exposure to authentic language use hinder fluency, vocabulary growth, and confidence. Additionally, unclear course expectations, outdated curricula, and insufficient learning facilities further decrease motivation and slow skill development. To overcome these challenges, students can leverage technology, create study groups, and integrate English into daily activities, while institutions should enhance curriculum relevance and provide better learning resources. From the statement above which states that there are a lot of things that can hinder them in the process of learning English because their expectations are broken by the lack of some things that are not in accordance with what they expect [10], this results in a decrease in motivation in learning English and they are still difficult to develop their English skills [11].

5. Comparison

This study compares the expectations of EFL students with the reality they experience in the English Education Department. Students expect adequate learning facilities such as language laboratories and discussion rooms, a relevant and practical curriculum, and a campus environment that promotes the daily use of English. However, they encounter limited facilities, a theory-heavy and less applicable curriculum, and an environment where Indonesian or regional languages dominate. These mismatches directly impact their learning motivation, hinder English language skill development, and increase academic stress. Therefore, curriculum reform, improved infrastructure, and the creation of a more immersive English-learning environment are necessary to support students' academic and professional growth. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for institutions to make improvements to enhance the quality of English language education in higher education. Comprehensive and continuous improvements will help create a more positive and productive learning experience for students.

6. Conclusions

This research examines the unmet expectations of English Education students regarding facilities, curriculum, and the English-speaking environment, and their impact on learning. Inadequate facilities, such as limited language labs and learning resources, hinder skill development and reduce motivation. An outdated and impractical curriculum fails to equip students with relevant competencies, increasing academic stress and limiting creativity. Additionally, a non-supportive English environment, where lecturers and students rarely communicate in English, further impedes language acquisition. These unmet expectations lead to decreased motivation and suboptimal English proficiency, affecting students' readiness as future educators. To enhance learning outcomes, institutions must improve facilities, update curricula, and foster an immersive English-speaking environment.

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