

**PERCEPTIONS OF PROFICIENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE USERS AND
LEARNERS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY
ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH**

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to identify the perceptions of proficient English language users (PELU) and learners with limited English language proficiency (LELP) about the benefits of proficiency in English and the priorities they give to the benefits. The distinction between proficient English language users (PELU) and learners with limited English language proficiency (LELP) was made based on the scores obtained by first-year students for English in the university entrance examination and the results of English proficiency tests administered in the first semester to first-year students studying in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities at Arba Minch University. A qualitative approach was used and data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews with ten PELU and ten LELP learners who were purposively selected from top and low scorers respectively. The qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and coded and grouped into one theme and six sub-themes. Findings in the study show that PELU and LELP students reported six benefits of proficiency in English related to education, job opportunities, communication with the international community, knowledge of other cultures, entertainment, and accessing information. As far as priorities given about the benefits of proficiency in English was concerned, the study revealed that PELU learners tend to regard the job opportunities associated with a good command of English as an important benefit, while students with limited English language proficiency tend to regard the understanding of study material and passing of examinations as chief benefits associated with English proficiency.

Key words: English as a foreign language; Proficient English language users (PELU); Good learners, Limited English language proficiency (LELP); Poor learners.

INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that a quarter of the world's population speak English either fluently or reasonably competently. It is serving as a language of government, law-court, media and education in more than seventy countries over the globe (Crystal, 2003). Graddol, in his book *The future of English* (2006), predicts that around three billion people will speak English by 2040. It is therefore understandable that Mahboob (2005) labels English as the world's fastest growing language and that Seidlhofer (2011) describes the global spread of English as "unprecedented and unparalleled". There is no other language that matches English in terms of worldwide use. English is thus becoming an international commodity and has made the world a "global village" (Krishnaswamy & Krishnaswamy, 2003). In its capacity as the world's preferred language for international communication in multiple domains, English has gained the status of a lingua franca (Crystal, 2003; Crystal, 2010:). Due to the multiple roles English plays in the global communication, it seems inevitable for people to have this key to get into the global village. Hence, the current status of English in the world emphasizes the importance of having a good command of English in order to function effectively in a globalized society. In many countries where English is used as the language of business, communication, medium of instruction, students' English proficiency often has more impact on their career success and their university grades. There are, however, many factors that influence the success of second or foreign language learning. Knowing which dynamics contribute to the development of proficient language learners can not only help students to improve their language learning efficiency but also assists teachers to improve their teaching of a second or foreign language to learners with limited language proficiency (Rubin, 1975; Sewell, 2003). As a result, there is currently "a keen interest in what it takes to be a successful language learner" (Lee & Heinz, 2016) especially in countries such as Ethiopia where English is being taught as a foreign language. This is because "... if we knew more about what the 'successful learners' did, we might be able to teach these strategies to poorer learners to

enhance their success record” (Rubin, 1975, p.49), and that knowledge about good language learners can be used to lessen the difference between the good learner and the poorer one.

A preliminary study of the literature reveals that good language learning depends on a number of factors related to the learner, learning and teaching, and some external factors. The middle of 1970s and early 1980s was particularly the time when researchers started giving attention to questions about why some learners were successful in learning a second (or foreign) language and others were not. Thus, most of the research focused on searching for what successful language learners were doing when learning a second language which “poor” language learners were not doing (Pitt, 2005). This change of attention from searching for teaching methods that best serve language teaching to focusing on the learner differences in language learning was perhaps a natural progression in the expanding field of language teaching (Grenfell & Harris, 1999). The shift in focus occurred as the realization dawned that no singularly perfect language teaching method existed (Brown, 2000). One result of this awareness was a closer examination of individual learners. In other words, instead of searching for a good method, the hunt was for the good learner. This interest was prompted by the assumption that some language learners are more successful than others though they are learning in the same environment and similar conditions (Tekeste, 2006; Heugh, et al. 2006) and thus the focus shifted to identifying differences between the ways individuals learn an additional language (Pitt, 2005).

The shift in focus from methods to the learner coincided with the shift from behaviorist to cognitive theories which gave different emphasis to factors that influenced second or foreign language learning (Schunk, 2009). Behaviorists believe that the learning environment has more effect on language learning than learner differences. They stress the role of the environment in terms of arrangement and presentation of stimuli (by means of a particular teaching method) and the responses shown after the stimuli are reinforced. Reinforcement history and

developmental status were the major considerations (Schunk, 2009). Cognitivist theorists, on the other hand, take the role of learner differences as a major impact on language learning. Cognitivists explain that what teachers do can serve as environmental inputs for learners, whereas what students practice with the combination of corrective feedback enhances learning. Cognitivists in this regard put much emphasis on students' beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, motivation and values (Schunk, 2009). Kumaravadivelu (2006) categorizes the variables put forward by cognitivists into individual factors and affective factors. Individual factors include age, anxiety, empathy, extroversion, and risk taking. Affective factors include variables which characterize students' disposition like perception, attitude, aptitude and motivation (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Coining the Good language learner

The concept "the good language learner" (GLL) was first coined by Rubin in the 1970s. After initially preparing a draft paper on the good language learner in 1971-1972, it was submitted to various scholars for comments and improvements before it was finally published in 1975.

Rubin (1975) mentions three variables, namely aptitude, motivation and opportunity on which successful second language learning depends. She is of the opinion that aptitude is the least subject to change and that although aptitude tests are useful to predict success, they neither assist in finding what "tricks" the better students use to get to the right answer nor do they provide information to poorer students about good language learners' habits that they can emulate in order to improve their language learning. As far as aptitude is concerned, Rubin (1975) reasons that instead of focusing on aptitude, one should rather isolate what the good language learner does and share that with less successful learners because it might assist in diminishing the gap between good and poor learners. In terms of motivation, it is postulated that good language learners are highly motivated to communicate, no matter where they are (Rubin, 1975). As far as opportunity to use the target language is concerned, Rubin (1975) notes that good language learners

both take and create opportunities to practice what they have learned, while poorer learners merely passively do what is required of them. Good language learners are, according to Rubin (1975), willing to guess, have a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from communication, are not inhibited, are prepared to attend to form and to look for patterns in the target language, practice their language use, monitor their own speech and that of others and attend to meaning.

Rubin's research on the good language learner laid the foundation for, and initiated, further research on the topic. Stern (1975), Pickett (1978), Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978) and Spolsky (1989) were amongst those who attempted to isolate the characteristics of good (also referred to as proficient, successful or effective) second language learners in subsequent research projects. The research conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s on the good language learner was characterized by studies (especially those by Rubin, 1975; Naiman, Frohlich & Todesco, 1978; Bialystok, 1979; Chapelle & Roberts, 1986) that focused on the learner and learning and as such constituted a whole paradigm shift in thinking about language acquisition and learning. These researchers focused on what makes a good language learner and why some learners develop language proficiency faster than others even when the learning situations and the input are constant. Although several studies were done on 'the good language learner', Klapper (2006,p74) claims that none of the studies that have been done can claim to be conclusive with the result that "... we still do not have an entirely reliable picture of what personal qualities and approaches to learning are most conducive to effective language learning.

Rationale for this Study

After reading on the topic of factors that could influence the learning of a target language (inter alia Rubin, 1975; Vann & Abraham, 1990; Skehan, 1989; Ehrman, Leaver & Oxford, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Griffiths, 2008 and Liang, 2009) the researcher repeatedly came back to the questions: "Why are some language learners successful and others not?", and more importantly: "What can

we learn from the perceptions of proficient language users about benefits of proficiency in English on the one hand, and how can we use that knowledge to improve our own teaching practices to ensure success for learners with limited English proficiency?” These questions motivated the researcher to work on this piece of study to know the difference between proficient English language users and learners with limited English proficiency about their perceptions on the benefits of proficiency in English and the priorities they give to the benefits. A number of studies have already been done on the influence of isolated factors such as motivation, language anxiety, aptitude, learning strategies and teaching methods on language proficiency (Kumaravadevelu, 2006; Brown, 2000; Richards & Renandya, 2002). These studies were done typically targeting the good language learners or proficient language users and neglecting learners with limited language proficiency. A thorough search of the literature, at the researchers disposal, revealed an article on strategies of unsuccessful language learners (Vann & Abraham, 1990). The research conducted on this topic was qualitative in nature and it was about the students’ opinion on the factors that contributed to their language learning problems. The current piece of study is different in its focus. It tried to identify perceptions of both good and poor learners about benefits of proficiency of English. The result of this piece of study is assumed to help teachers to learn from perceptions of successful language learners and improve their teaching practice in order to assist unsuccessful language learners. It will also help researchers to study the factors that contribute for the success of good language learners and suggest possible teaching methods that improve the record of unsuccessful language learners.

In order to guide the study, the following research questions were formulated:

- What are the perceptions of proficient English language users and learners with limited English language proficiency about proficiency in English?

- Do proficient English language users and learners with limited English language proficiency prioritize the benefits of English proficiency in the same way?

METHODOLOGY

Approach to the study

A distinction is mostly made between qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. In this study, a qualitative approach was used to collect and analyze the data. It is used because qualitative research lends itself to progressive shaping. This means that the research approach is not prefigured; rather, it is open to new detail that comes during the progress of the study. It is further flexible to the extent that research questions can be changed or refined in the course of the research (Dornyei, 2007).

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used for the study. Purposive sampling here refers to selection of respondents who are appropriate to answer the research questions (Patton, 2002). In this case, the scores obtained by the students in the Entrance Examination as well as in the Proficiency test were considered to select the respondents. Based on their results, ten Proficient English language users (PELU) among those who performed the best (above 85% or “A” grade according to Academic legislation of Arba Minch university) and ten learners with limited English language proficiency (LELP) among those who performed the worst (between 30-45% or “FX” scorers) were purposefully selected for this study. The College of Social Sciences and Humanities was conveniently selected because the college was within the reach of the researcher.

Data collection

Data were collected by means of structured interviews conducted with 20 purposively selected participants 10 from the PELU group and 10 from the LELP group. Interview is the preferred instrument for obtaining authentic accounts of the issue because it is one of the data collection methods by which an interviewer gets greater understanding about the case in point from the respondent's point of view. It gives a researcher a chance to access perceptions of the respondents on issue in question (Gray, 2009). Patton (2002) states that an interview is used to elicit information that is in someone's mind but not to put ideas in someone's mind. Gray (2009) explains that an interview involves the examination of feelings or attitudes when the objective of the research is an in-depth understanding of cases; while Mears (2012) claims that interview is more than just questions and answers, but rather

... purposeful interactions in which an investigator attempts to learn what another person knows about the topic, to discover and record what that person has experienced, what he or she thinks about it, and what significance or meaning it might have (p. 170).

In this particular study, semi-structured interview was employed. The participants were requested to explain their perceptions about the benefits of proficiency in English. Follow-up questions based on the students' responses to the questions were asked in order to probe answers. A suitable time was agreed with each of the participating students and conversations lasted between 30 to 45 minutes to discuss the following interview questions: - Do you think that learning English is important? Why? (Students were prompted on what they perceived as the benefits of proficiency in English?)

Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data involves a systematic process of coding data either inductively or deductively, organizing data into categories, synthesizing and

searching for patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Creswell and Plano Clarke explain that qualitative data analysis involves "... coding the data, dividing the text into small units (phrases, sentences and paragraphs), assigning a label to each unit and then grouping the codes into themes" (Creswell and Plano Clarke, 2011, p.208). This procedure, which is also endorsed by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), was followed to analyze the qualitative data collected by means of interview. In this study the process of inductive analysis was followed, meaning that the researcher has moved from specific data to general categories and patterns (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). To put it differently, the researcher has analyzed the meaning of the data in terms of the participants' ways of explaining the perceptions about the benefits of proficiency in English, and noted patterns, themes, categories and regularities. After re-reading of the interview transcriptions, the transcribed texts were divided into different segments which can be described as small pieces of data that stand alone or text that is understandable by itself and contains one idea or relevant piece of information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This division into different segments allowed for chunking data into different themes or subthemes. All similar categories were thereafter grouped and labeled with a code as is advised by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007), McMillan and Schumacher (2010) and Cohen, et al. (2007).

The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of participants. After gathering data through the semi-structured interviews with proficient English language users (PELU) and limited English language proficiency (LELP) students, the interviews were transcribed verbatim noting all verbal and nonverbal communication (Pontin, 2000). Thereafter the transcribed interviews were given to the participants in order to determine whether the data was accurately transcribed and to verify that their responses were captured correctly.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the qualitative data are analyzed and the findings presented. Qualitative data were collected by means of interviews. The findings of the qualitative data are presented in one main theme and six sub-themes that correspond to the objective of the study.

Benefits associated with English language proficiency and priorities given to the benefits

The interview question that participants had to respond to was about their perceptions on the benefits of proficiency in English and the priorities they give to the benefits. They had to provide reasons for their answers. Although all participants from both PELU and LELP groups indicated their perceptions about proficiency in English, the reasons they provided differed. Their reasons provided were in some cases related to the benefits of being proficient in English, but in some instances the participants had to be prompted on the issue of benefits. The responses were discussed and interpreted in line with the two research questions of the study. The first research question was:

- What are the benefits of proficiency in English for proficient English language users and learners with limited English language proficiency?

Based on the responses of PELU and LELP participants of the study, six benefits of proficiency in English language were identified. Five of the benefits indicated below were reported by both PELU and LELP participants but the benefit associated with knowledge of other cultures was reported by PELU participants only.

Theme and sub-themes

Theme (related to the research questions)

Theme 1: Benefits associated with English language proficiency

Sub-themes

- Benefits related to education
- Benefits related to job opportunities
- Benefits related to communication with the international community
- Benefits related to knowledge of other cultures
- Benefits related to entertainment/leisure
- Benefits related to accessing information

The second research question which the participants were asked was:

- Do PELU and LELP first-year students of the Arba Minch University prioritize the benefits of English proficiency in the same way?

The analysis presented under each subtheme herein revealed the priorities they gave to the benefits of proficiency in English.

Sub-theme 1: Benefits related to education

Both PELU and LELP participants agreed that learning English and having a good command of the language is important because English is the medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education in Ethiopia and as such is needed to understand other subjects. The importance of English for learning other subjects as indicated by both groups of students is clearly explained by the following responses received from PELU-9 and LELP-2:

Without English, it is impossible to learn other subjects. The syllabus of other courses in Ethiopia is prepared in English. Students must learn English in order to learn other subjects. (PELU-9)

English is a medium of instruction in schools, so learning English is very important. (LELP-2)

Apart from this, most PELU and LELP participants indicated that English is a means of getting general knowledge through reading non-academic resources such as fiction and newspapers. The following two quotations from LELP-3 and PELU-4 show on the one hand that they regard English as an important means of obtaining general knowledge and on the other hand it shows the difference between the ability of LELP and PELU students to express themselves adequately in English:

It is important because in present time the language dominant and international language. I am interested because to multiple information from various sources. In this time different materials are publish by using English language. It helps to became global manipulation. (LELP-3).

PELU-4 on the other hand, expressed himself in the following way:

English is a language by which knowledge and wisdom are transferred ... You can also read the Bible in English, if you know English. So, e-e-e learning English helps to access printed and online resources to gain knowledge and information (PELU-4).

One of the main differences between the responses received from PELU and LELP students is related to the use of English for passing examinations. The majority of LELP students regarded English as important for passing examinations in other subjects and specifically referred to that. Although a small number of the PELU participants also mentioned this, they mainly emphasized the benefits of knowing English for their own development and personal growth. The following two quotes from LELP-9 are typical of the responses received from the majority of LELP participants (LELP-1; LELP-4; LELP-5; LELP-7; LELP-8). For them English is important because they need it to pass examinations and be promoted to the next level.

I entered university because I know English and I am good marks in entrance examination...

I do not worry for speaking or writing. I am worry only for my correct construct sentences. If I correct sentences the teacher is give good mark. I always study grammar book and also vocabulary words. When this is happen, I get good marks.

From the responses it seems that both PELU and LELP students understand the benefit of English for the purpose of education and gaining general knowledge. Although LELP learners understand the benefit of English for their education, they perceive it narrowly and mostly related to passing examinations. This is the notion of the majority of LELP students that English is beneficial because one needs it to pass examinations.

From the responses provided by both PELU and LELP students on the importance of learning English and the benefits of knowing English, one could also come to certain conclusions about how motivated they are. It could be deduced that the two groups of learners were motivated by different factors. In the first place both groups were extrinsically motivated to learn English because they understood that English is a medium of instruction in Ethiopian schools (Article 3.5.7 of Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic Education policy, 1994) and needed to be learnt as such. This external drive has motivated both groups to learn English. However, it seems that PELU students tended to become intrinsically motivated in the process. They started to enjoy learning the language by doing tasks and activities. For example, the response of PELU-10 for interview question 3 depicts the thoughts of almost all PELU learners.

You see you do not learn English unless you work hard. Uhm, uhm, you learn by reading your resources and you do not complain. Books have many things that they teach you. So I read many books, my notebook, handouts, do exercises my teacher assigned. So I have improved my

English from time to time. I speak very good now and I do not worry for mistake. Language mistake is not bad because you will improve that later. The only thing is to try, try, try, and want to learn, then you will improve.

Although both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are important in foreign language learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Klapper, 2006), intrinsically motivated learners perform better than extrinsically motivated learners for long-term retention (Brown, 2007). It is thus clear that motivation plays an important role in English foreign language learning.

Sub-theme 2: Benefits related to job opportunities

Although both groups of participants referred to the role of English in opening up job opportunities, considerably more PELU than LELP participants referred to the wider range of job opportunities that are available both nationally and internationally if one is proficient in English. Some PELU participants (four in total) referred to the benefits that knowledge and understanding of English have for facilitating international trade and making money. The following response provided by PELU-4 aptly summarizes these four participants' sentiments on the value of English in terms of job opportunities and wealth creation:

English is a means of getting income and making money. It helps to get jobs in Ethiopia without a degree or diploma from college or university, for example, e-e-e people who speaking good English get tour guiding jobs in many places of Ethiopia and he also get jobs in international hotels. They run their own business in international trades. It also opens opportunities to get a good job outside.

Based on these findings a deduction related to motivation of the two groups of students could once again be made. It seems that PELU students who participated in this study were more instrumentally motivated than LELP students. Instrumentally motivated learners' motivation stems from the desire to meet goals such as securing jobs (Klapper, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Sub-theme 3: Benefits related to communication with the international community

The majority of PELU participants indicated that English is an international language and it is a means of communication with people worldwide. They prioritized the ability to be able to communicate and interact with people internationally. Some of them stated that knowledge of English facilitates mobility of people from country to country and that an English speaking individual can easily communicate with other individuals who may not speak his/her home language. Except for one participant, all other PELU participants mentioned the role that English plays as lingua franca. In this regard, PELU-1 compared the ability to speak English to a passport that allows one to travel from country to country:

It facilitates mobility of people from country to country, it is like a passport. I mean, it enables a man with knowledge of English to go from place to place and talk with people without difficulty.

It was, however, not only PELU students who referred to the value of English for opening doors to be part of the international community, most of the LELP participants also indicated that English is an international language, which facilitates worldwide communication. Both groups of participants recognized that learning English is undoubtedly important and compulsory in the global world. They understand that the world has already become one village and that people of the world are using English as their common language. For instance, PELU-2 stated that, "...the language is the language of the world and it ties the world as one village", while LELP-6 said, "It is global language, therefore, to communicate with all parts of world you need to learn English."

The responses of the two groups reflect the claims of scholars such as Crystal (2003), Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy (2003) and Graddol (2006) that

there is no other language that matches English in terms of worldwide use (Crystal, 2003), that English has made the world a “global village” (Krishnaswamy&Krishnaswamy, 2003) and that English is a global language that functions as a lingua franca (Crystal, 2006; Firth,1996).The students (both PELU and LELP) seem to be aware of this status of English.

Although both groups of participants agreed on the important role that English plays as a lingua franca in a global village, the analysis of their responses shows that LELP students’ command of English is very poor in comparison with that of PELU students. PELU students are far more capable of expressing themselves. They could easily say what they wanted to say during the interviews and their responses were on average longer than those of LELP students. Their language was understandable whereas LELP learners struggled to express themselves and tended to pause a lot between sentences. As can be seen from the response of LELP-2 on the prompts “to what extent it is important?”, the message is almost incomprehensible.

Only the strategy given is written on teacher’s book simply. When he gives punctuation, he read some notes that is on the book. This mark followed by this full stop is put at the end of the sentence comma is followed by this. The strategy is that only written on teacher book. I use to listen and apply the teacher is teaching. Vocabulary it is also the same.

LELP learners also frequently resorted to their mother tongue and tended to repeat a lot as can be seen from the following response of LELP-9:

Yes it is important because, it used to.. መግቢያ እና[for communication] with people. It is to communication በጣም [I like it most] I like English. I want to listen English speech በጣም [I like it most] I like to listen Obama’s speech he is wonderful speech. I like some of Americans and I

want to be accent like American እነሱ አያካብዱም ግልጽ ናቸው ደስ ይለል አነጋገራቸው [their English is understandable, the way they speak is nice].

This shows that although both groups of learners are in agreement on the importance of English in the international arena, their practical skill in using the language is totally different. LELP participants' perceptions about the language and their practice of the language are not congruent whereas PELU students' perceptions about the language and their practical usage of the language seem to be in harmony.

Sub-theme 4: Benefits related to knowledge of other culture

Most PELU participants disclosed that English is useful means to understand people of the world in a better way because it is spoken all over the world. They are interested in learning English because they want to know and understand the culture of English speaking communities and would be interested to work in English speaking countries. Studies by Dornyei (2005) and Gardner (2001) show that those who are interested in integrating themselves with the language community are driven by an intrinsic desire and are more successful in learning the language. This shows that proficiency in a language is likely to happen when one develops an interest in the culture of the speaking community. This can be seen from the fact that eight out of ten PELU participants indicated a desire to know English so that they could know more about the culture of English speaking communities and could be employed in an English speaking country. For instance, the following responses of PELU-3 and PELU-10 can be taken as an example of the interest of most PELU learners:

Knowing English will make someone a bilingual. It facilitates -e-e-e employability in any country. That means it makes someone an international person. Learning English enables one to share culture and exchange cultural information with English speaking people. (PELU-3).

I like also their culture. They are hard-working people. I want to learn their culture because I want to be hard worker like them. So I read and listen about their culture and so on. That is good to develop my English also. (PELU-10).

Sub-theme 5: Benefits related to entertainment/leisure

Both PELU and LELP participants indicated that one of the benefits of learning English was increased opportunities for entertainment. Some PELU participants referred to the dual role that English videos, films and music play in this regard. On the one hand, they enjoy watching English videos and films for entertainment and, on the other hand, they learn English by watching films and videos and listening to music. PELU-1, for instance, disclosed, “It [English] helps for enjoyment, to listen music, watch films”, while PELU-3 stated that, “English makes people to enjoy themselves by watching international films and music and also learn English in the process”. However, except for LELP-4, no other LELP respondent referred to the benefit of English as a means of entertainment. LELP-4 said that, “English helps to entertainment and for enjoyment with friends through English language”.

Sub-theme 6: Benefits related to accessing information online

Most of the PELU participants saw English as a language through which knowledge and wisdom are transferred, and indicated that learning English enables one to access online resources to gain knowledge and information. English is regarded as the language of the internet. For example, PELU-10 stated that:

English is the language of internet and we can access any information or knowledge on the internet. If someone knows English he can be self-dependent, he can easily access information on the internet. He can access knowledge about health issues for example if he is sick he can learn on the internet how to get medicine without going to a doctor. He can also meet a doctor through the internet, get medicine. He can consult

people on different issues like legal issues, global issues and religious issues. He can even get wife by filling forms in the internet. He can get job opportunities on the internet. He can also buy and sell goods in the internet. He can also learn course in the internet, yeah.

This reveals that PELU learners' understanding of the benefits of learning are not superficial, but are more out of personal interest in learning English and is related to personal development and growth ("knowing English is knowing the world") associated with knowing English as can be seen from the following response from PELU-5:

I am interested in learning because knowing English is knowing the world. I am very much interested in learning English because various reading materials on the internet are written by English language.

In contrast to the PELU participants, very few of the LELP participants indicated the benefit of English as a means to access information worldwide. Whereas almost all PELU participants indicated that they were interested in learning English, LELP participants did not mention interest at all. They instead displayed a negative attitude towards English and commented on how difficult they found it to learn English. For example, LELP-2 said "... because for us English is secondary or third language and learning is to somewhat difficult, it is difficult for me" while LELP-6 claimed that "English is not my mother tongue I feel stress because I am not competent speaker I also miss a words that express my idea effectively."

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study was designed to identify the perceptions of proficient English language users and learners with limited English language proficiency about the benefits of proficiency in English and the priorities they give to the benefits. Based on the analysis of the data, the following conclusions were drawn. Both PELU and LELP students perceived six benefits of proficiency in English. They associated

the benefits of English proficiency with the purpose of education, for securing job opportunities, for the purpose of communication with the international community, for the purpose of learning the culture of others, for entertainment, and for accessing information. However, the two groups of learners differ in the priority they give to the benefits of English proficiency. PELU learners prioritized the benefit of proficiency in English for securing job after completion of their studies whereas LELP learners prioritized the benefit of proficiency in English for understanding study material and passing examinations while still attending university.

From the priorities the participants gave to English proficiency, one can say that PELU and LELP learners could be different in many ways. Therefore, further research is recommended to find out other factors that make PELU and LELP learners different. The knowledge about the factors that contributed to the success of good language learners can be used to design a method of teaching that lessens the difference between the good learners and the unsuccessful learners.

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