

Trust in the Process of Teaching and Learning English in Indonesia

ABSTRACT

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When a person is willing to act something for the benefits of others without considering any risks he or she may obtain due to belief that the others will perform as expected, it means that this person trust the others. The objectives of this study are to examine the existence of trust and to investigate the reason of students trusting the teachers, and to reveal how trust between students and teacher is built. The researcher adopted a random sampling to take the sample for interview of this study. There were 10 teachers and 22 students who participated in the interview. In addition, the researchers used questionnaire as well to gather the data of 260 students. The interview results were analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding. The questionnaire findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings suggest that trust within student-teacher relationships during the process of English language teaching and learning at university level is relatively good, since 64% students trust their teachers. The students have adequate reasons to trust the teacher. Correspondingly, the teachers are able to build the students' trust.

Keywords: trust, teaching and learning English, building trust in teaching English

Introduction

Trust is defined as 'the willingness of a party (trustor) to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (trustee) based on the expectation that the other (trustee) will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712). From this definition, Colquitt, Scott, and LePine (2007) highlight two components: the willingness to be vulnerable to the action and the expectation of the

trustor that the trustee will perform the action. In this respect, trust embodies a willingness to take a risk and the trustor's optimistic expectation that the trustee will conduct the action.

Trust in a trustee increases when the trustee is trustworthy; a trustee is trustworthy when they are characterized with *ability*, *benevolence* and *integrity* (Mayer & Davis, 1999; Mayer, et al., 1995). Ability is synonymous with *competence*, while benevolence is a trait congruent with *loyalty*, *openness*, *caring* or *support* (Colquitt, et al., 2007; Mayer, et al., 1995). Integrity refers to '*fairness*, *justice*, *consistency* and *promise fulfillment*' (Colquitt, et al., 2007; Mayer, et al., 1995).

In order to perceive that a trustee is trustworthy, a trustor needs a medium within which to evaluate. One such medium is communication. When a trustor communicates intensely with the trustee, they have managed to attain a significant perception of the trustee's trustworthiness (Becerra & Gupta, 2003). At this stage, the trustor may take a risky action as an outcome of trusting the trustee (Mayer, et al., 1995). Nevertheless, trust is not context-free (Ryen, 2008). Several contextual factors determine the degree of trust, including who engages in the relationship, the power equality that exists, how the trustor and trustee perceive the degree of risk, and what other favourable traits are assigned to the trustee that the trustor can consider (Mayer, et al., 1995). Cultural background and duration of relationship can also become determinants in building relationship trust (Guillen & Ji, 2011). Meanwhile, considering a gender factor in a management context, females obtain higher trust than males (De Vita & Prevett, 2010).

Undoubtedly, within the teaching and learning process, trust offers a positive situation for the teacher to better run the class and is an essential classroom element (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Robinson, 2007). A trusting bond can empower students to take a learning risk even when they do not obtain direct advantage from their action (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998; Wubbels, Creton, & Hermans, 1993). In order to foster trust in teaching and learning, the teacher and student should communicate didactically, as 'swift trust' between students and teacher can develop through a process of communication or dialog (Freire, 2000; Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996). In this respect, a didactic communication process promotes confidence that the teacher is competent, supportive and a fair figure, which indicates an impossibility of the teacher abusing the students' trust. With such confidence, students are convinced to engage in a close, deep, and pro-social relationship in the classroom or school setting (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007 ; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). However, the researcher finds no study about trust in the process of teaching and learning English in Indonesia so that he undertakes this study. The objectives of this study are to examine the

existence of trust and to investigate the reason of students trusting the teachers, and to reveal how trust between students and teacher is built.

Methods

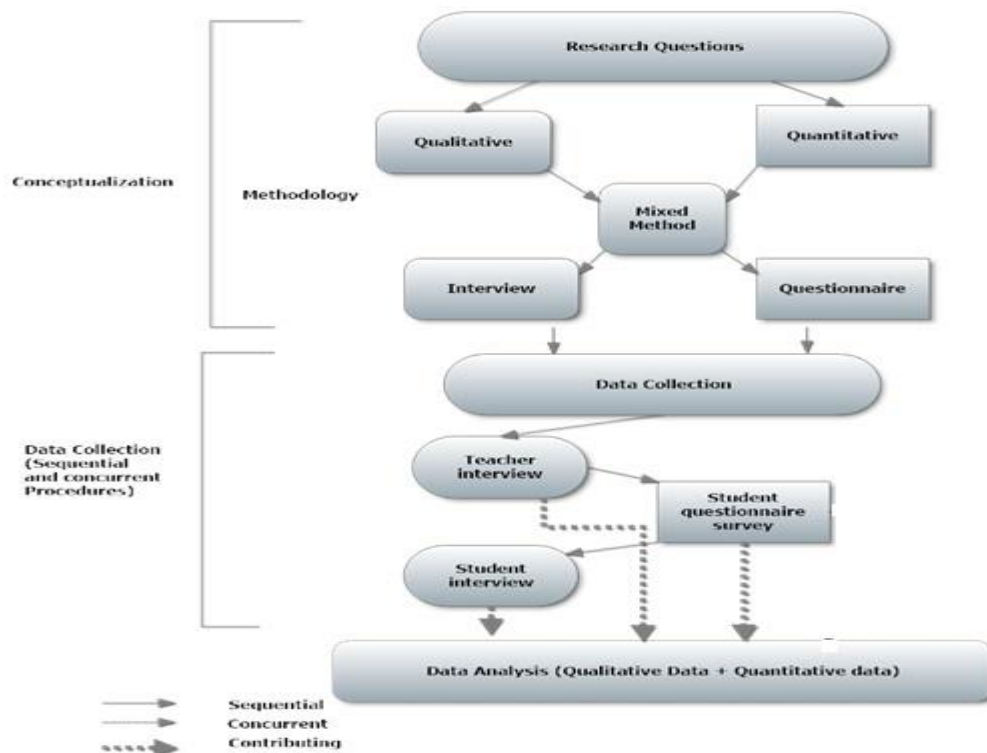
This study adopts mixed method design. This study adopts mixed method design. A mixed methods research possesses a definition as “research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry” (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). Similar definition is presented by other experts stating that:

“Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”

(R. B. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007 p. 123)

To provide clarity on how to conduct the research, the figure below searches for this purpose.

Figure 1. The research design of this study.



The study was conducted at Language Training Center, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia at 2014. The researcher adopted a random sampling to take the sample for interview of this study. There were 10 teachers and 22 students who participated in the interview. In addition, the researchers used questionnaire that was adopted from the questionnaire to reveal trust construct by Murray and Zoch (2011) to gather the data of 260 students. The interview results were analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding. The questionnaire findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The findings and discussions

Trust is an imperative element in the student-teacher relationship in the educational process (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Robinson, 2007). The interview responses indicate that the trust of the students to their teachers is at a reasonably effective level. This section addresses detailed findings covering the existence of trust and how students in this study build trust in their relationships with their teachers.

Existence of Trust

An exploration of the qualitative data shows that students trust their teachers in their relationships within the process of English language teaching and learning. Both students and teachers confirmed the existence of trust between them. All students who participated in the interview stated that they trust their English teacher, yet only five of them explicitly mentioned the degree of their trust, as seen in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. The degree of students' trust shown in qualitative data.

Students	Degree of trust
Student 2	95 %
Student 3	99 %
Student 6	99 %
Student 11	At average
Student 17	50 %

The excerpt below confirms the existence of trust in the student-teacher relationship from a teacher’s perspective.

Excerpt 1

...many students trust me to talk not only about English, but they also consult with me about their future planning, how to apply for scholarships, and also their personal problems dealing their girlfriends or boyfriends...

(Teacher 5)

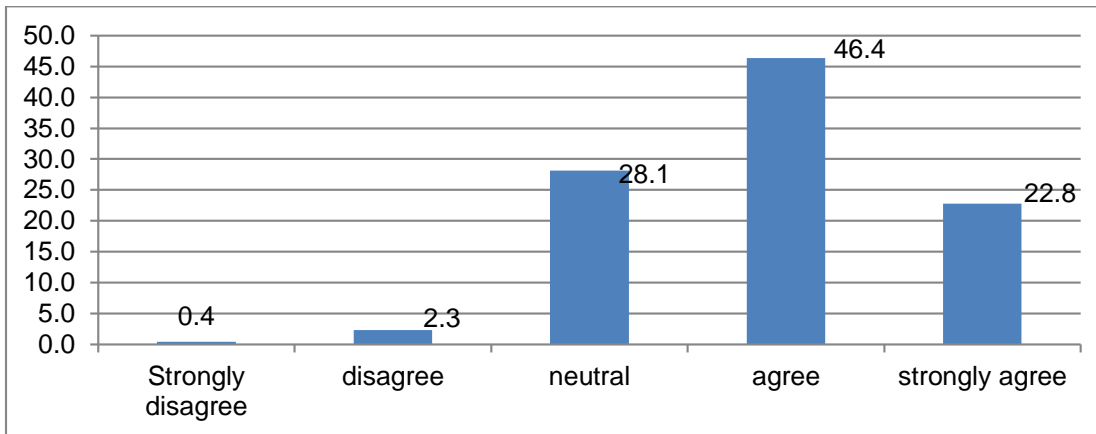
This excerpt invites the idea that some teachers are open and supportive of their students – being open and supportive is one of the characteristics for becoming trustworthy (Colquitt, et al., 2007; Mayer, et al., 1995). Table 2 below shows the quantitative data regarding students’ trust in teachers.

Table 2. Detailed quantitative data of students’ trust toward their teachers.

Questionnaire items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
1. My lecturer helps me understand myself better.	3.8	9.1	28.9	41.8	16.3	100.0
2. My lecturer accepts me as I am.	2.3	3.8	22.1	40.7	31.2	100.0
3. My lecturer respects my feelings	0.8	8.4	23.6	44.1	23.2	100.0
4. I feel my lecturer is successful as a teacher	1.1	3.4	27.0	38.4	30.0	100.0
5. I trust my lecturer.	0.4	2.3	28.1	46.4	22.8	100.0
6. My lecturer trusts my judgment	1.6	4.7	46.7	36.9	10.2	100.0
Total Average	1.7	5.3	29.4	41.4	22.3	100.0

The data in Table 2 points to very low levels of disagreement for group questions in the questionnaire. Item 12 (*I trust my lecturer*) of the quantitative data demonstrates the lowest disagreement, indicating the perception of students’ high trust toward their teachers. A combination of “Agree” and “Strongly agree” responses shows that 69.2% of students trust their teachers and only 2.7% of the students do not trust their teachers. Based on this data, it can be stated that the level of students’ trust toward their teacher is reasonably strong (see Figure 1 below).

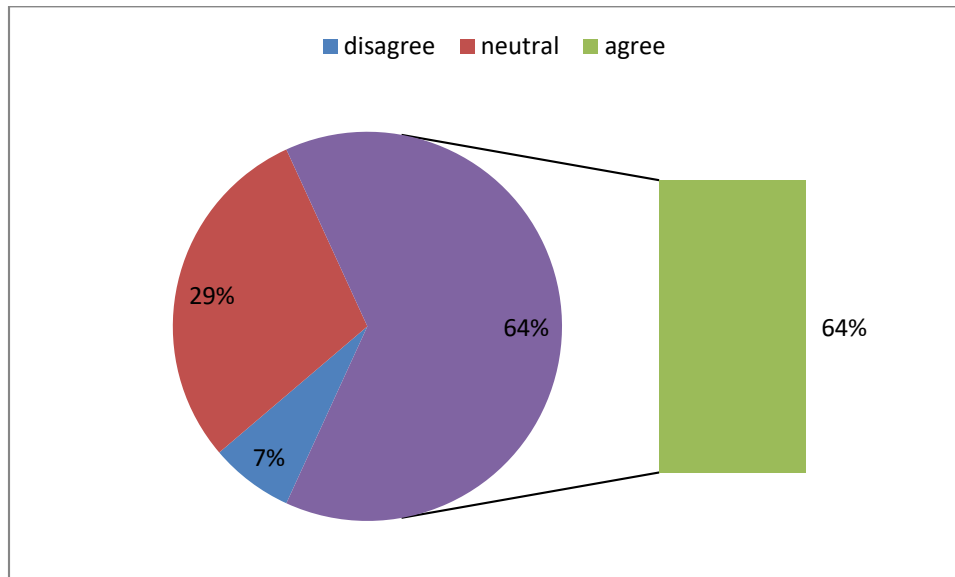
Figure 2. The students' trust toward the teachers.



Item 13 (My lecturer trusts my judgment) shows when expressing their problems, students must express their own judgement toward their own problems. Toward the students' judgment, 47.1% of students (combining agree and strongly agree response) perceive that the teacher trusts the students' judgment, 46.7% of students perceive that the teacher is neutral and 6.2% of students perceive that the teacher does not trust their students' judgment). Based on these data, I find that there is a mutual trust between students and teacher. On one side, the students trust their teacher (see figure 2). On the other side, the teacher trusts students' judgment when the students express their own judgment of their problems. This condition fosters trust building between student and teacher.

The quantitative data gives another insight when the students' perceptions are classified into three different categories: "disagree", "neutral", and "agree" to trust the teachers. The "disagree" category is a combination of students who choose "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses. Meanwhile, the "agree" category is a combination of "strongly agree" and "agree" responses from students while the "neutral" category stands by itself. The average score of the data demonstrates that (after rounding), 7% of students perceive no trust in the teacher, 29% feel neutral, they neither trust nor distrust their teacher, and 64% agree that they trust the teachers in their relationship in the process of English language teaching and learning as illustrated in Figure 3 below

Figure 3 The average score of the student trust to their teachers



Trust can be categorised into three levels: weak-form trust, semi-strong-form trust and strong-form trust (Barney & Hansen, 1994). Weak-form trust refers to trust that does not have any consequences, semi-strong trust involves vulnerability of, at least, loss of reputation (Blomqvist, 1997), while strong-form trust has binding bases of history, culture, belief and values. In this study's sample of Indonesian students, trust in the relationship between students and teachers can be categorised as semi-strong trust.

The first reason for reduced trust involves the vulnerability associated with losing reputation. Teachers who abuse students' trust by not teaching them appropriately may lose their reputation both in front of the students and with university management, since teaching is assessed at the end of every semester (see Except 9). Another reason for reduced trust levels is that the relationship between students and teachers, despite being placed within a historical and cultural context, does not possess historical, belief and cultural ties that can result in an obligation to trust one another. Thus, it is not appropriate to categorise this level of trust as strong-form trust. Hence, the trust between students and teachers can be categorised as semi-strong-form trust.

The interpretation of neutral responses as a form of weak trust can be said to show that 7% of the students have no trust toward their teachers, 29% have weak-form trust, and 64% have semi-strong form trust (as justified previously). This analysis suggests that, for most students, trust does not become an issue.

Trust does not appear without cause. Trust in the student-teacher relationship is built as a result of their interactional processes (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

Reason for trusting the teachers

The qualitative data shows several reasons why students display relational trust toward their teachers in the process of English language teaching and learning. The first reason is that students trust the teachers because they see evidence of improvement after having a class with the teachers.

Excerpt 2

I trust my teachers because, from biweekly class meetings, joining international class program, and attending English seminars, my English improves every day. So, I trust my teachers because they are good.

(Student 15)

As Excerpt 2 shows, the student can ascertain that the teachers are supportive and competent to help students improve their English skills. When students perceive the improvement, they trust that the teachers are competent in facilitating their learning. The teachers have managed to build characteristics of integrity and benevolence (Colquitt, et al., 2007; Mayer & Davis, 1999; Mayer, et al., 1995).

Another reason reported by students for trusting the teacher is because the teacher encourages and guides them to learn. From their interaction in real teaching practices, students feel the benefits of the encouragement and guidance that the teachers provide, which may become a source of motivation for them to learn. With this cause, the students' trust towards teachers grows.

Excerpt 3

I trust the teachers because I see them from their teaching practices. They are encouraging and guiding us to master English better.

(Student 18)

The third reason reported by students for placing trust in their teachers is due to the belief that what the teachers say is factual. Telling things factually means telling the truth and being truthful –

this is one of the measures of trust (Denize & Young, 2007). Excerpt 4 demonstrates how being truthful can induce students to trust their teachers.

Excerpt 4

Yes, I trust my teachers because what the teachers said corresponds to the fact and we can learn English together.

(Student 19)

The final reason to trust the teachers relates to the ways the teacher conducts classes. When the students are asked whether they trust their teacher in the process of English language teaching and learning, two students answered as follows:

Excerpt 5

I trust my teachers because ... my friend and I do not really know about tenses. When the teacher explains about that ... I do understand ...

(Student 16)

Excerpt 6

Yes, I trust my teacher. My teacher can help me master English because my teacher can speak fluently, the quizzes he assigned are understandable, and all the lessons he delivers are also understandable.

(Student 16)

In fact, the ways in which teachers deliver lessons reflect their practical and personal skills. Their teaching methods portray their competence and integrity (Kim, Cooper, Dirks, & Ferrin, 2013). As competence and integrity are the makers of trustworthiness, students have strong basis to trust teachers with such characteristics (Colquitt, et al., 2007; Hardin, 1996, 2006; Mayer, et al., 1995).

Trust building

In the process of English language teaching and learning, trust is built through communication. The teachers' comments in qualitative data identified four different sets of actions that could help build trust: identification, convincing students, providing solutions, and maintaining good teaching practices. The following subsections present excerpts that support these findings.

a. Identification

At first, teachers identify the students' reluctance to talk to them. When asked about how to start building trust in a relationship with a student, one teacher replied:

Excerpt 7

They (students) feel doubtful at first since they would talk to another person that they do not know previously...

(Teacher 1)

In the identification stage, the students and teacher begin to get to know each other. Students feel cautious toward their teachers about whether they are the right person to consult about problems that hamper their learning. Teacher 1 seems to be aware of this condition.

b. Convincing the students

The next step shows how the teacher convinces the students to trust them, as illustrated by Excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8

However, usually in early meeting I explained to them that if you want to talk to me, I will keep everything confidential and will not inform others dealing with the problem you face.....

(Teacher 1)

This guarantee of confidentiality by the teacher could build a secure base from which students can trust the teacher to express their problems. The trust building does not stop here, it continues by the teacher offering solutions to students' problems.

c. Providing solutions

A teacher also discussed how he offered solutions to students:

Excerpt 9

I offer solutions when they tell me their problems and I answer all of their questions. *Then I maintain my teaching practices well.* Later, I know that students trust me from their willingness to study again with me in the next semester and also from the teaching evaluation sheets that are distributed at the end of the semester.

d. Maintaining good teaching practice

Offering solutions to students' problems, answering questions, and maintaining teaching practice are ways that teachers use to build trust with students. These ways are in line with what students perceive, as seen in Excerpts 5 and 6 that state the reason for a student trusting the teacher is the way the teacher teaches. The italics in Excerpt 9 (above) highlight that, by building trust, a teacher maintains a good teaching practice.

Conclusion

In short, these findings suggest that trust within student-teacher relationships during the process of English language teaching and learning at university level is relatively good, since 64% students trust their teachers. The students have adequate reasons to trust the teacher. Correspondingly, the teachers are able to build the students' trust. Therefore, the element of trust is not a problem in student-teacher relationships in the process of English language teaching and learning at university level in Indonesia.

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