

**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
GRADUATES' JOB PREFERENCES:
A CASE STUDY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING CENTER
TEACHERS**

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Abstract

The demands of English as an international language keep increasing along the time. Through time, the needs for learning English vary for different purposes. Then, the realization comes to the surface that not all groups of learners need to learn general English. Thus, the design of English courses is developed for specific purposes as they are best known as English for Specific Purpose (ESP). The needs for learning English in specific purpose enable English teachers to pose themselves in different challenges other than in formal education. This paper aims at investigating the motivation of some English Education Department graduates for working as English instructors at English courses. The qualitative data was obtained by conducting an interview to some English instructors in an English course in Yogyakarta. After analyzing the data, it was found that despite its challenges, some English Education graduates prefer to work in English courses to regular schools. With all privileges of working in an English course, some general motives underlie their working preferences. Among of the factors are flexible teaching situation, more chances for improving personal competence, higher salary and moderate career prospect.

Keywords: English Education Department Graduates, Working Preferences, English Courses

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesian context, English is considered as a foreign language that should be mastered by students. The need for learning English is essentially affected by the advancement of technology and more globalized era (Brown et al., 2008). Moreover, English proficiency is required in some affairs such as for entering universities, applying for scholarships and applying for jobs. This condition forces Indonesian students to learn English. Otherwise, they cannot compete

with others in this globalization era. Since learning English is a necessity, the nonformal education sectors, especially English language learning centers growth rapidly across some cities in Indonesian including the Special Region of Yogyakarta. In line with this fact, Carron and Carr-Hill (1991) also claimed that nonformal education programs proliferate rapidly over the past few decades and radically entering the field of education. The English language learning centers commonly have some programs such general English or conversation class, TOEFL preparation and simulation, IELTS preparation and simulation, English for kids. Even some of English language learning centers are available for doing translation, proofreading and interpreting.

Categorized as nonformal education, English language learning centers play an important role in the field of English language teaching. Many people believe that the existence English language learning centers contribute to the success of achieving English proficiency by providing specific and relevant materials, link and match of teaching methodologies and qualified teachers. Rogers (2004) defined non formal education as broad and rich of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which are acquired outside schools. Moreover, the terminology of non-formal education also refers to 'flexible learning', 'alternative learning', 'complementary learning', 'supplementary education', 'second chance education' and 'extracurricular activities'(Yasunaga, 2014). These terms amplify the image of English language learning centers as nonformal education, commonly known as the place for students to upgrade their English performance after studying at schools. The English language learning centers also play a role as complementary learning or supplementary education which can support the better students' achievement. Moreover, the teaching approach in English language centers seem to be different from schools since they are often claimed as more learner centered than most formal education institutions (Etling, 1993). Another feature distinguishing English language learning centers to the formal education is that they have more flexible learning materials. Students can request to learn only certain materials that they want without following the sequence/the level of the materials. Of course, there are also some considerations and justifications done by English language learning centers to allow students moving to a certain material. In line with this, Dib (1988) argued that the education process in non-formal education is characterized as using flexible curricula, applying flexible methodology and also adapting to the needs or interests of students more dominantly. English language learning centers can also be categorized as English for specific program in terms of the offered programs. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) mentioned that a course is established to meet the needs of various groups. In this case, English language learning centers provide any programs based on their students' needs such as TOEFL/IELTS preparation program and English for kids. Thus, as an ESP, English language learning centers provide different challenges for English teachers to take into account (Basturkmen, 2010).

Recruitment for new teachers' position in English language learning centers is held almost every year in June until August. Announcement of job vacancy for English teachers is often posted along with some requirements such as holding a bachelor's degree of English department, getting GPA minimum 3.00/ above, and having TOEFL PBT score 500/ above or IELTS score 5.5/ above. This situation corresponds with English department graduates who are seeking for a job. Meanwhile, schools as formal education also need additional English teachers to replace the retired teachers or furlough teachers. Recruiting new English teachers is expected to fulfill the vacant English teacher positions. However, issue on the decrease of English education department graduates willing to apply for school teachers' position is getting raised. Actually, they have reasons why they are not really interested to apply for that position because not all teachers have the same preferences in deciding where to work (Boyd et al., 2013). Moreover, to make

job decisions based on their preferences, teachers must feel like they already have plan and choices about where they want to work (Cannata & Penaloza, 2012). This is also influenced by their beliefs since belief is a kind of personal judgment that is subjective and experienced-based (Pehkonen & Pietilä, 2003; Raymond, 1997).

Some studies investigating teachers' job preferences have been conducted. Cannata (2010) conducted a study about investigating the teacher job search process. The findings reveal that most of the teachers focus on district rather than the school when they are identifying the open positions. In addition, they also emphasize on their feelings and familiarity when deciding to apply for teacher job position. In line with this, Cannata and Penaloza (2012) conducted a study on the job choices and preferences of charter school teachers. The results showed that charter schools teachers are generally less experienced teachers with lack of certification and they have greater preferences for working in any schools where they agree with the school mission. In addition, charter school teachers also perform less preference for working a school with a great deal of job security. Meanwhile they tend to find schools which are close to where they live. Since the previous studies focus on investigating teachers job preferences generally, this study will focus on specifically investigating the job preferences of some English education department graduates for working as English teachers at English language learning centers rather than at schools. Thus, this study deals with two research questions presented as follows.

1. How do the English education department graduates compare the working situation between English language learning centers and schools?
2. How do the English education department graduates make judgments about their job preferences?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study. Several reasons support this study to be classified as a case study. Firstly, a case study positioned the researchers to be the instrument within the context of a unique, special or interesting case in order to understand the social phenomena naturally (Creswell, 2009; Neale et al., 2006; Merriam, 2009). In this case, job preferences of English education department graduates become the specific case explored in this study. Another important reason is that a case study answers "how" and "why" questions (Yin, 2003, p.1). Thus, this study provided two research questions in form of how and why questions. Moreover, this study involved four English education department graduates who are currently working as English teacher in one of the most popular English language learning centers in Yogyakarta. From the four participants, two of them were junior teachers, as they only had two years teaching experiences while the rest participants were senior teachers holding for more than 5 years of teaching experiences. Furthermore, in terms of the teaching classification, the formers were responsible for beginner students while the latter handled intermediate-advanced students. The data were collected through semi-structured interview and questionnaire. Then, the collected data were analyzed by following the three steps, namely (1) data reduction, (2) data display and (3) drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the interview and questionnaire, the researchers gained rich information related to the job preferences of some English education department graduates who are currently working as teachers of an English language learning center. The findings are presented in accordance with the two research questions mentioned earlier.

The comparison of working at English language learning centers and schools

The result of the questionnaire led the researchers to identify what aspects considered by the participants to teach at the English language learning center. There were 13 statements classified into eight categories covering personal reasons (number 1, 2), teaching experience (number 3, 4), salary (number 5, 6), career prospect (number 7, 8), time flexibility (number 9, 10), location (number 11, 12), working workload (number 13, 14), and students' motivation (number 15, 16). From the eight categories, the researchers found that career prospect and location do not become the participants' considerations for teaching at the English language learning center.

Table 1. The Questionnaire Results

No.	Statements/Questions	Responses			
		SA	A	D	SD
1.	I enjoy teaching at English language learning centers.	3	1		
2.	I am used to teach at English language learning centers.	1	2		
3.	I know that teaching at English language learning centers is different from teaching at schools.	2	2		
4.	I do not find any problems teaching English at English language learning centers.	1	3		
5.	English language learning centers offer attractive salary.	1	3		
6.	In terms of salary, it is possible that schools and English language learning centers offer different salary.	2	2		
7.	English language learning centers offer potential career prospect and professional development opportunity.		4		
8.	English language learning centers give better career prospect than schools.			2	2
9.	Working time flexibility becomes my consideration to teach at English language learning centers.	1	3		
10.	Schools have more fixed working time schedule.	2	2		
11.	Location becomes my consideration to teach at English language learning centers (e.g. your home is near your office).		1	3	
12.	I put the highest priority for working at offices near my house.			2	2
13.	Workload also become my consideration to teach at English at English language learning centers.	2	2		
14.	Commonly, schools have more complex administration.	3	1		
15.	I enjoy interacting with the students at English at English language learning centers.	1	3		
16.	Students at English at English language learning centers perform higher learning motivation than at schools.	2	2		

After doing the data analysis process, the researchers classify the eight categories into two main categories, namely internal factors and external factors. The internal factors refer to any factors coming from the participants themselves. Meanwhile, the external factors relate to any factors coming from the outside of the participants. In this case, the external factors become the aspects for comparing between the working situation at English language learning centers and at schools. Since career prospect and location are not considered by the participants as the reasons for teaching at the English language learning center, therefore, these two aspects are excluded in Table 2. However, those aspects are discussed at the last section.

Table 2. Factors Influencing the Job Preferences

Internal factors	Personal reason Teaching experience
External factors	Salary Time flexibility Administration systems/workload Students' motivation

The internal factors play a role as the participants' foundation for conceptualizing their perceptions for comparing the working situation between at the English language learning center and at schools. Firstly, the personal reason relates with their own motivation for teaching English at their institution (English language learning center). Two participants stated that they chose the English language learning center because they already started teaching English since they were still studying in the bachelor's degree. Thus, generally English language learning centers allow senior English education department students (minimum at the 5th semester) to apply for part-time English teacher positions. Conversely, schools only employ the ones who already hold the bachelor's degree (S1) for filling out the English teacher position. The rest of the participants only stated that they taught in the English language learning center because they want to help students learning English and to practice their teaching skills.

Actually, this is not the only English language learning centers that I have joined. I ever taught in some other English language learning centers since I was in bachelor's degree. The reason is that I want to find as many as possible teaching experiences since I was a student of bachelor's degree and usually English language learning centers accept any senior students who are willing to teach English. Therefore, I choose English language learning centers to start my career.

Interviewee 1

Because I already worked in since I was a student of bachelor's degree. At that time, my friend offered me for teaching English here. Therefore, I think it's good for me to find teaching experiences here. Well I enjoyed teaching in this institution.

Interviewee 2

The reason why I am teaching here is that I want to help everyone to learn English. I want to make everyone love English.

Interviewee 3

The reason of why I work in nonformal educational institution is that this institution still in line with my expertise, I mean teaching English. Besides, I can practice what I have learned in my campus as well as get the salary from this institution.

Interviewee 4

Secondly, teaching experience also becomes the factor influencing how the participants shape their minds about the issue of teaching English at schools and English language learning cen-

ters. Two of the participants admitted teaching at schools while the rest did not. Those having experiences to teach at schools also worked as senior English teachers at English language learning centers. Therefore, they could give more detail comparison of their perception in teaching at both institutions as they already experienced teaching English in both formal education and nonformal education. However, the voices of the junior teachers should also be considered since they are fresh graduates and may have different perspective regarding to the job preferences.

Yes. I ever taught in two schools. One is for around 2 years while the other is 3 years.

Interviewee 1

Never. But I have done the teaching practicum/internship teaching at a school.

Interviewee 2

Yes. I ever worked as a teaching in one of junior high schools in Yogyakarta for around 2 years.

Interviewee 3

Never. Ya I never worked as an English teacher at formal schools.

Interviewee 4

Moving to the external factors of choosing to teach at English learning centers rather than schools, the participants mostly highlighted the aspects of salary, time flexibility, and administration systems. Talking about salary, it is undeniable that that almost all of teachers around the world prefer to work with high salaries. The high salary becomes the significant factor in influencing the teacher job preferences since higher salaries perform dual benefits as retaining and attracting the effective distribution of teachers (Hendricks, 2015). From the four participants, most of them acknowledged that mostly English language learning centers gave higher salary than formal schools. Moreover, schools usually set the fixed monthly salary for their teachers without giving any additional fees. While, the salary system in English language learning centers is counted per meeting and is also influenced by the teachers' performances and the number of classes they handle. Accordingly, schools or educational institutions' situation such as pay scale, working hours, work load, class size number, attitude of students, awareness and mentality of parents affect the teachers job satisfaction (Chamundeswari, 2013). They also get additional fees if they reach the teaching target. However, the participants realized that every school and every English language learning center may have different salary system and different salary standard. It is quite hard to justify the level of English teachers' salary between schools and English language learning center accurately, but at least they can compare them by common facts. Moreover, the workload also becomes the consideration in which most of the participants perceived that schools give more workload than the English language learning center. In schools, teachers are demanded to be more responsible for taking care of their students. The level of teacher salary may also affect a wide range of teachers' life situation since high salary improves teachers' satisfaction of their income, reduces the possibility of holding outside (non-teacher) jobs, and reduces self-reported financial stress (De Ree et al., 2017).

Based on my experience, commonly English language learning center offers higher salary than schools. I can say this because in schools we have more workload than in English language learning center. In schools, we have to work full time and be responsible for taking care of the children such as we

should waiting for the children until their parents pick up them.

Interviewee 1

I think it is a bit higher in English language learning center, but ya it's not that high.

Interviewee 2

In schools, the salary is commonly fixed while here the salary is based on how many classes that teachers handle. So it may be a bit higher than the schools.

Interviewee 3

Of course, the salary is possibly different. I may say if in a school we get Rp X while in English language learning center we can get three times or four times. Personally, I prefer the salary in nonformal education just like in this institution.

Interviewee 4

The second aspect is time flexibility. Most of the participants claimed that they preferred to teach English at English language learning center because of the time flexibility. Compared to schools, English language learning centers do not insist their teachers to always stay at the office. They only need to come to office when they have classes.

Yes. I like to teach here because of the time flexibility. I only come to the office when I have the scheduled classes. It is not necessary to standby the whole day at the office, so it's more efficient, I think.

Interviewee 1

Yes, of course.

Interviewee 2

Firstly, I don't know that English language learning center provides more flexible working time. But later It know it and I like it. I can do other businesses when I don't have classes here.

Interviewee 3

Ya I like the flexibility of the working time. Even, I have plan to work both in schools and in this institution (English language learning center). I can work the whole day at schools and I work here at evening.

Interviewee 4

The third is administration system. Both English language learning centers and schools focus on educational field. However, the nature of the administration system is a bit different. In this case, the administration system related to the working culture affects positively to the teachers' job satisfaction as well as their teaching performance (Arifin, 2015). Schools have more complex administration system as the teachers need to make lesson plan, syllabus, semester plan (program semester), annual plan (program tahunan), additional materials, attendance list, assessment procedure, teachers' journal, score reports, remedial programs etc. Moreover, they must refer to the national curriculum. In comparison, English language learning centers mandate simpler administration for the teachers such as lesson plan and students' progress report. They do not use the national curriculum, but they design their curriculum system based on the

students' needs. On this aspect, Kleis et al., (1973) claim that the learning content in nonformal education learning is adjusted with the students' needs in order to maximize and achieve the learning goals. In addition, the number of students allowed in a class is different. Commonly, schools have 20-30 students for every class while the English language learning centers only have 7-10 students for each class. In short, job characteristics also become an important factor in choosing a job since they are potentially affecting worker turnover not only through preferences but also other job opportunities (Bonhomme et al., 2016).

Based on my experience, schools demand more administrations than English language learning center. Sometimes, the curriculum does not really match to the students' development. For example, sometimes a student's cognitive level is higher than materials suggested by the curriculum. As a result, we need to create teacher-made materials.

Interviewee 1

Well, it is quite different since commonly schools have 20-30 students for each class. But here, there are only 7 students allowed for a class. Besides, commonly we need lesson plan, syllabus, etc. while here I only need to follow the module suggested by this institution. It is quite simple.

Interviewee 2

Here, any teaching materials are already prepared, so I just use it for teaching. It is quite simple.

Interviewee 3

If we are teaching at schools, we have more students in a class. It will affect the teacher focus. I like to teach here because I only handle fewer students in a class and I can give more focus for each of student.

Interviewee 4

The last external factor, students' motivation in learning, admittedly contributes to the teachers' decision to teach at schools or English language learning centers. Generally, the elements of teaching practices such as interaction with students, professional autonomy, and self-growth affect to the teachers' satisfaction. Meanwhile, the issue related to school structures and policy making are perceived as the teachers' dissatisfaction (Karavas, 2010; Day, 2002; Day et al., 2006; Shann, 1998). It could be inferred that students' interaction with teachers revealing their motivation to learn English influences the teachers' satisfaction to their job as teachers. Low level of job satisfaction may lead to the teachers' motivation for leaving teaching profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Most of the participants claimed that students in English language learning centers showed higher learning motivation than students in schools. Most students choose English language learning centers because of their motivation to learn English. On this issue, nonformal education seems better than formal education in term of satisfying students' needs (Dib, 1988). In short, the students have higher awareness of learning English.

Based on my experience, the students here are really enthusiastic to ask for learning materials which are used to support their materials at schools.

Interviewee 1

Ya, I think it is different. Since learning at schools is like a must, sometimes the students are bored. While in English language learning center, they come

here based on their willingness to learn English.

Interviewee 2

Of course, it's different. I think the communication and interaction between teachers and students are more fun here (English language learning center) than at schools. The students who are learning here are because they really need and want to learn English.

Interviewee 3

Commonly students who are learning here (English language learning center) are because they need English. They come with their willingness. Even, some students look more active to ask questions to me when they have some problems. It is really different from schools which commonly students are hesitate to ask questions to their teachers.

Interviewee 4

The other two aspects which were not considered by the participants as the reasons for teaching at English language learning centers were career opportunities and the location of workplace. English language learning centers give potential career prospect as well as schools. It is hard to justify that English language learning centers give better career prospect than schools. The participants gave various responses. However, most of them generally argue that both schools and English language learning centers provide the same potential career opportunity.

I think both schools and English language learning centers offer the same career opportunity. The most important thing is that the management systems in the institutions whether the management is subjective or objective to assess the teachers' performances.

Interviewee 1

Ya. I think almost the same. But if we are working at English language learning centers, we can have more opportunity to widen relationships. For example, we often do collaboration with other institutions to conduct TOEFL test and in-house training. So, we can get more challenging experiences.

Interviewee 2

We need to see from various aspects. Let say if we want to have more enjoyable and fun working environment, we can choose English language learning centers. We will get lower level of stress here than working at schools. But if we think about the long-term teaching career, we may choose schools.

Interviewee 3

It depends on the status of the teacher itself. If we are permanent teachers, ya it's good enough, I think. But if we are only contracted teachers, I think we need to perform higher achievement, so we can get the permanent teachers' status. This also happens for schools. So, I think both schools and English language learning centers have the same career prospect.

Interviewee 4

Lastly, the location did not become the participants' reasons for teaching at English language learning centers although some of them like to work near with their house. In this case, they did not put the location as the highest consideration for choosing the workplace.

Actually, I don't have problems with the location of my office. But I also enjoy to work at office which is near to my house. However, it is not the highest priority.

Interviewee 1

I think it doesn't influence my job preferences because my house is a bit far from this office.

Interviewee 2

Ya it is one aspect that I consider. But it is not the most important considerations for me to teach here.

Interviewee 3

I think location is not the most considered aspect for me to choose a job. If I enjoy to work in an office, I will work there although the office is not near my house.

Interviewee 4

To sum up how the participants compared working as English teachers at schools and at English language learning centers, table 3 below presents a brief description of schools and English language learning centers working situation based on several aspects.

Table 3. The Comparison of Schools and English Language Learning Centers Working Situation

Aspects	Schools	English language learning centers
Salary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed salary. • No additional fees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonly offers higher salary. • The salary is counted per meeting and based on how many classes handled by the teachers. • The salary is also based on the teachers' teaching performances.
Time flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not flexible. • Teachers should work full time in a fixed working hour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively flexible. • Teachers only come to the office when they have classes.
Administration systems/workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand more complex administrations. • A class consists of 20-30 students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simpler administrations. • A class consists of 7-10 students.
Students' motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not always motivated because learning at schools is an obligatory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform higher motivation because the students come to the English language learning center based on their willingness, their needs and their wants to learn English. • Students are more active to ask questions.

The judgment of the job preferences

After comparing the working situation between schools and English language learning centers, the participants also stated their judgment about their job preferences. They have various perspective in judging their job preferences. As presented in the following interview results, two participants judged their job preferences generally by following their passion. Meanwhile, the rest of the participants argued that working as teachers should be the choice of English language education department graduates. It is their responsibility as the graduates of a teacher training department.

In my perspective, we need to follow our passion when are choosing for a job. Just follow your passion because it makes you enjoy every single step of your working experiences. You know, some of my friends who are graduating from English language education department become entrepreneurs instead of teaching English. However, I personally recommend to the English language education department graduates to be teachers. Wherever we teach is okay, the most important thing is sharing our knowledge to our students.

Interviewee 1

I suggest to fresh graduate of English language education department to join many job fair events. There will be various job vacancies that they can try to apply. I think it's not a must for them to choose educational job. They may choose any kinds of jobs as long as they enjoy it and have passion on it.

Interviewee 2

As English language education department graduates, prioritizing the jobs which can improve of English skills is a must. It is not only the matter of gaining the high salary but also the matter of enhancing our professional skills. In addition, if you are fresh graduates, just find a job that you enjoy it. Later, you can try to be more selective to find jobs including the salary when you are already having a lot of working experiences and qualified professional skills.

Interviewee 3

I think working both at schools and at English language learning centers is good. Whenever you have chance to teach either at schools or at English language learning centers, just take it. Even, if you can teach both at schools and at English language learning centers, you are excellent. I highlight that the most important thing here is to be a teacher since we are the graduates of English language education department.

Interviewee 4

CONCLUSION

This study investigated English language education department graduates' job preferences for working at English language learning centers than at schools. The findings reveal some factors influencing the participants' considerations for choosing to work at English language learning centers. They are categorized into internal factors and external factors. The internal factors covering personal reasons and teaching experiences play a role as the foundation for the participants to conceptualize their minds in comparing the working situation between at schools and at English language learning centers. Personal reasons refer to their willingness and their possibility to teach at the English language learning centers since they were taking their bachelor's degree. Moreover, teaching experiences describe their experiences in teaching English either at schools or English language learning centers. Meanwhile, external factors comprising salary, time flexibility, administration systems/workload and students' motivation become the aspects for comparing the situation between working at schools and at English language learning centers. Higher salary, less administrations, fewer number of students in a class, more flexible working time and higher students' learning motivation admittedly become the participants' consideration for teaching at English language learning centers. Thus, labor market theory claims that the relative costs and benefits will be the consideration of teachers in making decision for searching a job (Petrongolo & Pissarides, 2001). Besides, the participants judge their job

preferences based on their passion and the linearity between their major and the job field. In other words, the participants work by following their passion and relating their major (English language education department) to their job field (as English teachers, English instructors or English lecturers).

As this study is quite specific and contextual, the results cannot be generalized for Indonesian, likewise international context. In addition, the results of this study were based on some English language education department graduates' voices about their job preferences which may be quite subjective or personal. However, this study comes up with its contribution in form of the pedagogical implications. The pedagogical implication of this study is related to the issue of proliferating the teacher identity of English language education department graduates. The findings of the study provide relevant insights for the fresh graduate of English language education department to be always prioritizing the English teacher/instructor/lecturer profession as their job choices. Lastly, the researchers suggested for further research which may focus on the issue of teacher identity. The topics may discuss why some English language education departments choose non-educational jobs and why some non-English language education departments prefer to work as English teachers.

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