

THE TEACHER CANDIDATES' PERCEPTION ON TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the perception of prospective teachers about how important it is to teach English to children at an early age or golden age. Researchers used quantitative descriptive methods. The subjects of this study were students from sixth semester who were taking English for Young Learners courses in the English Language Study program at the University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu who were referred to as teacher candidates. Data samples were taken from 42 active students. Researchers used questionnaires and interviews as instruments in this study. Using questionnaires to collect data from prospective teachers (Frankel & Wallen, 2009:395). The questions in the questionnaire were adapted from Supriyanti's theory (2012). This study resulted in a positive response from prospective teachers with a percentage of 95.24% neutral response and 2.78% negative response. The interview results of prospective teachers revealed the perception of prospective teachers that English for young learners is very important to learn when they are in their golden age easier to improve students' new vocabulary in learning English, helping them communicate well in the era of globalization Around the world using English in communication.

Keywords: Perception, Prospective teacher, English Young Learner

INTRODUCTION

English as an International language is needed by all levels of education to be mastered. This has made educators from all levels of education try to facilitate the best way of teaching and learning English. As a result, the teaching and learning English has been placed in a very important position and has been taught in almost all countries in the world. In Indonesia, English is known as a foreign language. Because English is a foreign language, most parents take their children to start learning English from an early age, and they also take their children to courses to learn more English. English is one of the international languages used as a means of communication in international relations and widely used in all branch knowledge. Brown (2001: 118), further states English, however, has become a tool for international communication in transportation, trade, banking, tourism, technology, diplomacy and science research.

Young learners are learners aged between five to twelve years, so the age of young learners is in elementary school. According to Bakhsh (2016, p. 121), it is agreed that young learners are children from the age of five or six who are in the first year of primary school up to the age of twelve. In addition,

many people realize that English is important and they have learned it from an early age. Early age is usually referred to as young learners. Also, they have studied English at basic to advanced level. English is a subject that has officially become a local content in elementary schools since 1994. The objective of teaching English in Elementary School is that the students have ability as the following: (1) To develop their communication competence orally in language accompanying action in school context. (2) To motivate students about the meaning and the importance of English in global community. (Depdiknas, 2006).

In teaching English young learners, the first thing the teacher must do is to know the characteristics of young students first. because if the teacher already knows and understands the characteristics of students, it will facilitate the process of teaching young people. Hang (2017) states that children with their characteristic as natural language acquirers, cannot be exposed to serious learning all the time. So the young learners are only serious about learning English, because they still want to play rather than study. For young learners to learn English from an early age is one of the most important and beneficial things, students will have the basics of learning English which will be useful when they face English subjects as compulsory subjects in junior high and high school.

The perception of Teacher candidates on the teaching English for young learners in elementary schools is very important to support the teaching and learning process. Teacher candidates who know that English is important for young learners will realize to teach more enthusiastically and try to be a good teacher for their students. This has an impact on increasing the success of teaching and learning English to the younger generation, which in turn improves the national education system.

There have been some researchers who conducted similar field to this research. First, a study by Oktaviani (2017) who found that respondents agree that children who learn foreign languages as early as possible will get better results. The teachers said that currently parents are interested in supporting and facilitating their children to learn English in the course. Because, parents think English will be useful for their children's future. Second, a study by Rahmawati et al (2020) entitled "Teachers' Perception On The Teaching And Learning English For Young Learners". They found that Teaching and learning English for young learners has positive and negative perception from teachers. The teacher views that young students are very active and easily bored in English Learning. But, activities like: song, stories, and the games can makes the students more interested, confident and motivated in learning English and can also improve their language skills.

And the last, a study from Listriyani et al (2018) entitled "Teachers' Perception Of Teaching English For Young Learners And the implementation In Public Primary School In Jembrana Sub-District". Based on the summary of the results of the questionnaire, the category of TEYL components that were found the most was strong and followed by the neutral category. From the first component of TEYL, teachers have a strong perception that young learners are highly inquisitive. teachers strongly agree with the component of teaching through activities and providing an enjoyable learning environment, while they have a neutral perception of the impact on student achievement in many areas.

Similar to this present research, all of previous studies above conducted research about the teachers' perception on the teaching English for young learners. The study found that the teachers' perspective on TEYL was positive since the importance of teaching English for young learners toward the improvement of

technology in modern days. However, there was no research which conducted the perception of teachers' candidates or preservice teachers toward the teaching English for young learners, especially teachers' trainers or teachers candidates at English Study Program of UMB. It is needed to know whether the teachers' candidates perception is similar to the teachers' perception or not since the teachers' candidates have not yet experienced well in teaching and learning English. According to Jannah (2019), there are 8 issues related to teaching and learning English for young learners, they are; young learners learn better, children and adult learn in the same way, it is easier to motivated young learner, children learn and develop in a different way and at different rate, adults have larger concentration span, teachers of young learners need special training, FLL at school should start early, children who learn language before adolescent are more likely to have native-like pronunciation, and children only need to learn simple language and topic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Researchers used quantitative descriptive methods. The subjects of this study were students from sixth semester who were taking English for Young Learners courses in the English Language Study program at the University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu who were referred to as teacher candidates. Data samples were taken from 42 active students. Researchers used questionnaires and interviews as instruments in this study. Using questionnaires to collect data from prospective teachers (Frankel & Wallen, 2009:395). The questions in the questionnaire were adapted from Supriyanti's theory (2012).

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

FINDINGS

This study resulted in a positive response from prospective teachers with a percentage of 95.24% neutral response and 2.78% negative response. The interview results of prospective teachers revealed the perception of prospective teachers that English for young learners is very important to learn when they are in their golden age easier to improve students' new vocabulary in learning English, helping them communicate well in the era of globalization Around the world using English in communication.

DISCUSSIONS

This research aimed to know the teacher candidates' perception on teaching English for young learners at sixth semester students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. The finding of this research revealed that the teacher candidate's perception on the teaching English for young learners was overall positive. The teacher candidates gave their positive perception on the three indicators used in the questionnaire of this research. The three indicators were; the widespread assumption that the younger a child learns a new language, the better the results will be; the fact that economic globalization has pushed the demand of English in the form of the workforce who speak English to meet the need of the international economic forces; and the enthusiasm of parents for their children to learn English

from an early age so that they have social and economic benefits in the national context. Moreover, the interview result revealed that the eight teachers candidates as the respondents of interview agree that teaching English for young learners was important since the improvement of technology. All of them agreed that teaching English for young learners can give benefits for the learners himself since they can follow the improvement of globalization era which happened all around the world.

The findings of this research confirmed some theories from experts. Firstly, the widespread assumption that the younger the child learns a new language the better the result will be. Most people agree with this assumption, because the child is in golden age learner. According to Lightbown & Spada (1999), the child has a superior ability in acquiring the sets or units of language, because the child is in golden age period due to plasticity and virginity of their brain. Secondly, the fact that economic globalization has pushed the demand of English in the form of the workforce who speak English to meet the need of the international economic forces. In the business world that more globalized, many local Indonesian companies enter into the world market, and many international companies enter the local market (Supriyanti, 2012). The use of English is becoming a necessity as the language of business. Therefore the people often find out a job vacancy in the website or newspaper, one of the criteria is able to speak English. It means that an applicant has to master English both passively and actively in order to face the international economic forces. The last, the parents are enthusiasm for their children to learn English early in order to have social and economical benefit in the national context. The parents realize that English is very important for their children. Therefore, the parents want their children to learn English at school, teach by them self at home and they also willing to spend some money for their children to learn English in the course. These efforts are done by the parents with hope their children will have social and economical benefit in the national context (Supriyanti, 2012).

Furthermore, the findings of this research were also similar to some previous studies. First, a study by Rahmawati et al (2020), they found that teaching and learning English for young learners has positive and negative perception from teachers. The teacher views that young students are very active and easily bored in English Learning. But, activities like: song, stories, and the games can makes the students more interested, confident and motivated in learning English and can also improve their language skills. Second, a study by Jannah (2019) who found that the participants had a positive opinion about teaching English in an at an early age, young learners will be able to memorize vocabulary and pronunciation easily when they grow up. Then, young students are better at learn a new language because they have higher self-confidence than adults. Carry on, Using interesting learning activities or fun learning will make it easier for the teacher to motivate young students and young students will get good mastery results English when they have a good interest in English and are supported by environment around them. Lastly, young student teachers must have special training to get good information about young students and how manage the class to provide interesting learning activities. And the last, Listriyani et al (2018) also found that the category of TEYL components that were found the most was strong and followed by the neutral category. From the first component of TEYL, teachers have a strong perception that young learners are highly inquisitive. teachers strongly agree with the component of teaching through activities and providing an enjoyable learning environment, while they

have a neutral perception of the impact on student achievement in many areas.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the teacher candidates' perception on the teaching English for young learners was positive. The teacher candidates' gave positive perception related to the widespread assumption that the younger a child learns a new language, the better the results will be; the fact that economic globalization has pushed the demand of English in the form of the workforce who speak English to meet the need of the international economic forces; and the enthusiasm of parents for their children to learn English from an early age so that they have social and economic benefits in the national context.

SUGESSTIONS

Based on the result of this research, it can be suggested for next researcher to conduct similar field of research with another theory and wider sample taken. For the government, it will be better if the students is learning English from Elementary level. The government can bring back the old curriculum related to the teaching and learning English from elementary school to high school level. And the last, for students, it was suggested to learn English from young learners since it can help them to encourage with English in earlier age.

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