

A study on English teachers and students' perception toward English learning at SD Muhammadiyah Pakel

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ABSTRACT

English is the most widely spoken language, making it extremely important in the modern world. Teaching young learners English is a must nowadays. This study investigates the perceptions of English learning among teachers and students at SD Muhammadiyah Pakel. Despite English being removed from the elementary school curriculum under Permendikbud No. 67 of 2013, the school continues to teach English as a Local Content subject. Through semi-structured interviews with one English teacher and ten sixth-grade students, a descriptive method was used to describe the results from the two groups of participants. The results of this qualitative study showed that the teacher and the students had positive perceptions towards English Learning in the school. Furthermore, the result also showed that English learning in Elementary Schools should be improved so that students get the benefits from learning English.

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1. Introduction

Language is our primary way of communication, and it is how we share our ideas and thoughts with others (Ilyosovna, 2020). Each country has its own national language and local languages that its people use to communicate in daily life. There are thousands of languages throughout the world, each with its own set of sounds and meanings. English is the most widely spoken language on earth, making it extremely important in the modern world. This is due to its position as an international language, making it the world's language of communication. Since practically all international information sources in a variety of aspects of life use English, proficiency in the language is crucial. A language obtains genuinely global status when it develops a distinct role that is acknowledged in every country (Crystal, 2003).

English is the first foreign language that is formally taught in the Indonesian educational system. The four English language skills; listening, reading, speaking, and writing, have all been taught to learners as young as kindergarten and elementary school. However, under Permendikbud No. 67 of 2013 explains the basic framework and structure of the elementary School Curriculum in Indonesia, where the English subject was removed and the subject was no longer taught at the elementary school level in Indonesia. The purpose is to give elementary school students to improve their abilities to master Indonesian before learning foreign languages.

Regardless, many elementary schools still include English lessons by including English lessons in Local Content lessons (Muatan Lokal). According to Sya & Helmanto's (2020) study "Pemerataan Pembelajaran Muatan Lokal Bahasa Inggris Sekolah Dasar Indonesia" reveals that 84% of elementary schools in Indonesia still hold English lessons. SD Muhammadiyah Pakel is one of the schools that includes English as one of the subjects taught at the school. SD Muhammadiyah Pakel on Jalan Pakel Baru 40, Sorosutan, Umbulharjo District, Yogyakarta City, Province DKI. Yogyakarta. SD Muhammadiyah Pakel still teaches English because according to the school officials, English language education is very important for children's basic education as a provision for learning English to the next stage or level so that they are not left behind because in this modern era of globalization, almost all systems use English in operation and English is a global language, an international language used by various countries to communicate with each other, which means it is very important to be taught even when children are still in elementary school to avoid being left behind. SD Muhammadiyah Pakel once hosted the KMSI competition (Mathematics, Science, and English Competition) and SD Muhammadiyah Pakel also has awards from various competitions in the field of English subject. SD Muhammadiyah Pakel also had its students to take part in national-level English language olympiad competitions.

In the case of learning English in elementary school, English teachers and students of SD Muhammadiyah Pakel must have varied perceptions of learning English. According to Dewi (2021), Students' perception can be defined as the developed viewpoint resulting from a specific occurrence. The experiences teachers or students feel and experience will shape their opinions and the way they see things. Perceptions influence the learning process. Therefore, it is important to understand teachers' and students' perceptions of English at school (Luhuringtyas, 2013).

1.1. Perception

Perception comes from Latin words "percepio" that has meaning "receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, apprehension with the mind or senses". According to Walgito (2010), The initial stage before perception is sensing. This is the phase of the presence of a stimulus that is realized by the senses. The process, however, doesn't complete there because the stimulus is sustained, and the following process is perception. In addition, according to Safitri (2021), Perception is the interpretation of an object, event, or piece of information based on the life experience of the person who is performing that interpretation. The process of perception does not just happen. Perception occurs as a result of a complex process within an individual. According to Thoha (2014), states that the process of forming a person's perception is based on several stages: 1.) Stimulus or Stimulation. Perception begins when a person encounters with a stimulus or stimulation present in their environment. 2.) Registration. A visible symptom is a physical mechanism in the form of a person's senses and nerves that are influenced by the sensory organs they have in the registration process. 3.) Interpretation. This is a critical cognitive feature of perception, namely the process by which the stimulus is given meaning. The interpretation process is determined by how it is studied, as well as one's motivation and personality. 4.) Feed Back. After going through the interpretation process, the information acquired is perceived by someone in the form of stimulus feedback.

According to Irwanto et al. (2002), after humans interact with perceived things, perception outcomes have two general types: 1.) Positive Perception. This is one that is based on all knowledge consciously or unconsciously and according to expectations. The result is support for the object of perception. 2.) Negative Perception. This is that which is based on all knowledge consciously or unconsciously and not according to expectations. This will be followed by inactivity, rejection, and opposition to the observed object. Thus, perceptions, both positive and negative, will always affect a person's decision regarding their conduct, and whether a person has a positive or negative perception is entirely dependent on how they characterize all of their knowledge about a perceived thing.

1.2. English Learning for Young Learners

Due to its position as an international language, English being the world's language of communication. Since practically all international information sources in a variety of aspects of life use English, proficiency in the language is crucial. Learning English is important because English is the universal language, and many information on different aspects of life use English. According to Ilyosovna (2020), those are 6 reasons why English is essential: 1.) It is an international common language, 2.) It is an academic language, 3.) It provides us with access to a wide range of written media, both online and in print, 4.) It is useful for traveling, 5.) It is required if you wish to work in international business or commerce, 6.) It is Hollywood's language. Learning English has numerous

benefits for one's personal life and career. The significance of learning English in general is that it opens up a wide range of chances, including job and educational opportunities (Maduwu, 2016). For example, the student will have more opportunities to study abroad and learn various things that they can learn in another country besides their homeland. Wu (2010) stated that learning English as a foreign language is crucial for us to succeed in this age of globalization.

Learning a foreign language is very significant in many domains, particularly education, knowledge development, science and technology, and the workplace. As a result, learning English at a young age will be quite advantageous because young children can quickly learn a new language. According to Mustafa (2007), in another study indicating the benefits of learning a foreign language early, children who master a foreign language have advantages in terms of flexible cerebral, academic, language, and social skills.

According to Khairani (2016), English language education would be ideal if it began at a young age, preferably before the age of 12. This is the best age for children to begin learning a new language; therefore, the ideal age for children to begin learning English is when they begin elementary school. According to Antika & Afriyanti (2021), the aim of teaching English as a foreign language in elementary school is as follows: 1.) To develop students' basic language skills in English so that they can communicate both orally and in writing in school and in their environment. 2.) Early exposure to people, cultures, and nations from a variety of English-speaking countries. 3.) To develop a good attitude toward the English language, as well as a deeper understanding and respect for the country's culture.

According to Sari and Manara (2012), teachers demonstrate that they are acutely aware of the importance of learning English at a young age. Teachers consider learning English from an early age can be very beneficial. According to Sari and Manara (2012) this can be seen from: 1.) Their opinions that studying English should begin in elementary school. 2.) They believe knowing English is essential for following the globalization era. 3.) Learning English in elementary school will assist kids prepare for higher-level (junior high school) English lessons.

Motivation is a huge factor in the achievement of language learning. Children with a positive perception of the English language are more likely to complete the task, even if the level is more difficult. This leads to how the children's perceptions were processed toward English learning. According to Sardiman A. M (2001), learning motivation is related to psychological factors. It is not related to intellect, but passion, enthusiasm, or pleasure when learning. Learning activities for motivated students will be very enjoyable. In relation to teaching and learning, teachers have an important role in creating conditions or a process that directs students to carry out learning activities.

The ability to receive information is called receptive ability, while the ability to give information is called productive ability. Each of these abilities is further divided into two parts. Receptive skills are divided into listening skills and reading skills and productive skills are also divided into two parts, speaking skills and writing skills. A language learner can master these four language skills supported by the ability to master language components, namely mastery of grammar and vocabulary.

1.3. Review of Related Studies

The research by Luhuringtyas (2013) from the Satya Wacana Christian University, with the title "Teachers' and Students' Perceptions Toward Learning English in SD Negeri 1 Baturagung". Based on previous research, according to the research's results obtained by the interviews with teachers and the students, teachers and students' perceptions about English lessons in elementary school were favorable. also, from the research English learning in elementary school should be improved so that students can benefit from learning English.

The research by Hafrizal et al. (2021) from the Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia with the title "Students' Perception Toward English Subject and Their Learning Outcome". Based on previous research, according to the research's results obtained by questionnaires, interviews, and student scores. The student's perception of English is very high. The researcher also concludes that the student's perception of English has a close relation with students' motivation, and then learning motivation affects students' attitudes during the teaching and learning process in the classroom, which will result in students' learning outcomes.

1.4. Research Gap

The research by Luhuringtyas (2013) is similar to this study namely wanting to know the perceptions of teachers and students regarding English language learning in elementary schools. The difference in this research is in the subject, place, and year, then the difference is that Luhuringtyas' research also discusses students' motivation and attitude towards English lessons. The gaps in Hafrizal et al., (2021) are this research has a similar topic but this research is more focused on student learning outcomes, where the result shows that student perception has a close relation between students' motivation, and then learning motivation affects students' attitude during the teaching and learning process in the classroom, which will result in students' learning outcomes.

1.5. Research Question

The formulation of the problem is;

1. How the students' perception toward English Subject at SD Muhammadiyah Pakel?
2. How the English teachers' perception toward English Subject at Muhammadiyah Pakel?

2. Method

This research was conducted in qualitative research. According to Aspers and Corte (2019) the use and collection of what is learned from various empirical information such as case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts describing routines and troubled moments and meaning in an individual's life are all part of qualitative research. Qualitative methods are used to explore perceptions because they provide in-depth understanding. Qualitative methods are also useful in exploring perceptions because they capture the complexity and diversity of individuals' beliefs and experiences. Based on this explanation the researcher determined that the use of the qualitative method is the most suitable method for this research.

This study was conducted at SD Muhammadiyah Pakel of Yogyakarta. In this research, the researcher used an interview instrument with a type of semi-structured interview and a total of 22 questions of interview. The researcher has a lot of freedom in a semi-structured interview while still adhering to the interview protocol (Sharma, 2022). Even though the discussion between researchers and respondents is predetermined, the investigators may have considerable discretion. The framework of the Interview allows researchers to investigate any subject or use the Interview in creative ways. The semi-structured interview will focus on the interview while also allowing the researcher to explore relevant topics that may arise throughout the interview (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

This research is conducted on 04 – 09 March 2024 by interviewing the English teachers and 10 random students from 3 classes of a total of 104 students. Then the findings were analyzed by using Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis interactive model (Yuana, 2016). The process includes: 1.) Data reduction, First, the researcher collects the data, The data collection goal is to answer research questions about English teachers' and students' perceptions toward English learning at SD Muhammadiyah Pakel. The data was then transcribed by the researcher. Irrelevant or unrelated data to the research question was removed. Furthermore, the researcher presented the data in descriptive form after collecting and reducing it. 2.) Data display, it is a part that consists of a collection of information that is organized and shown in order to determine the facts and actions. This is accomplished through providing a structured and organized collection of information, as well as the option of concluding. 3.) Conclusion, As a result of the analysis, the conclusions are also validated. Following the collection of data, the researcher drew conclusions. As a result, the conclusions are analyzed and verified to be correct in order to reach a perfect conclusion

The process of reducing and displaying the data will be based on the formulation of the problem. The formulation of the problem is 1) How the students' perception toward English Subject at SD Muhammadiyah Pakel? 2) How the English teachers' perception toward English Subject at Muhammadiyah Pakel?

3. Findings and Discussion

Based on the results of interviews, students like learning English because they think English is fun, challenging, and not too difficult, and also with English they can communicate using languages other than Indonesian and can play games that use English as the game language.

According to student A, student A likes English lessons, because for Student A it's fun to be able to communicate using a language other than Indonesian.

"I like English lessons because it's fun to be able to communicate using a language other than Indonesian"

Students also think that English is useful because they can communicate with foreigners, read and get information or knowledge from reading materials or media that use English, and get scholarships by mastering English.

According to Student A, Student A thinks that English is beneficial, especially making it easier to find information using English, Student A also can communicate with foreigners because English is an international language.

"I think it's very useful, especially making it easier to find information because sometimes there is information that is in English and not Indonesian, and you can also understand if you suddenly talk to someone from outside, because English is an international language, it can be easier to communicate."

The researcher found that the respondents like learning English and think that learning English has beneficial uses for them, with English they can communicate with foreigners, read and get information or knowledge from reading materials or media that use English, and get scholarships by mastering English. This is in line with the theory of Ilyosovna (2020) and Maduwu (2016) that English is essential for students' daily lives and future. Students also like English because they can communicate and play games using English, which motivates them to learn English this is in line with the theory of Sardiman (2001) that students who have strong motivation will have a lot of energy to carry out learning activities.

When the researcher asked the teacher about the teacher's opinion about English language learning at the elementary school level. According to the respondents English Learning has been taught since the first grade and the respondent also said that English learning should be improved and it should be learned by the students who started not only from Elementary school but it would be greater if they could start early like in kindergarten. They can start to introduce English slowly at kindergarten so when they move to Elementary school, they already get used to learning English and they would not think that learning English is as hard as they thought. This is in line with the theory of Stakanova & Tolstikhina (2014), Khairani (2016), Sari and Manara (2012), Maili (2018) and Diniyah (2017) regarding the importance of teaching English from an early age to help students understand and become accustomed to learning the English language.

From the results of the interviews, researchers asked respondents about 4 basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), the researcher asked what basic skills they liked, and some students mentioned more than 1 basic skill, from the results of interviews 3 students liked speaking, 4 like listening, 2 like reading and 4 like writing. Respondents also answered the reasons why they liked the skill. According to respondents who like speaking, respondents like speaking because they can practice the skill directly and because when they make mistakes there will be a teacher to guide them when learning the skill. According to respondents who like listening, respondents like listening because by listening students can hear how a sentence is pronounced. According to respondents who like writing, the respondents like writing because they enjoy doing assignment and writing. According to respondents who like reading, respondents like reading because they know how to write a word in English and because the students like reading books.

"I like speaking and listening because listening makes us able to speak, there are many words that Indonesians don't know how to pronounce. By listening we know how to pronounce the word while speaking because we can practice straight away, and if there are mistakes in pronunciation when speaking there is a teacher who helps correct it"

“Reading and writing, because I like reading Indonesian books and books in English and I like writing because I like doing assignments, therefore I write a lot.”

Students also have ways to improve their skills. For listening, students watch videos in English and listen to podcasts, songs, and fairy tales in English to improve their listening skills. For speaking, students take tutoring, often communicate in English, and watch videos on YouTube to improve their speaking skills. For reading, students read articles and stories in English, play games in English, and chat with foreigners in the game. For writing, students use applications and often practice writing English vocabulary.

“For listening, I like watching videos from YouTube, especially video from abroad, to get my ears used to hearing foreign languages. For speaking, I take tutoring, where during the tutoring we get used to communicating using English, which makes me understand better.”

“To improve my reading skills by playing games and sending messages to players from abroad, especially from Singapore, using English and to write, I continue to practice.”

From the above, the students use podcasts, songs, and tales to improve their listening skills, this is in line with Nadiyya and Suryadi (2024), Afriyuninda and Oktaviani (2021), Naidionova and Ponomarenko (2018), and Syahabuddin and Rizqa (2021) and theory about how use podcasts, songs, and tales can improve students listening skill. Students also watch videos on YouTube to improve their listening and speaking skills in line with Shafwati et al. (2021), Damronglaohapan and Stevenson (2013), Anggraini (2021), and Riswandi (2016) theories about watching videos on YouTube can Improve students listening and speaking skills.

Researchers also asked about the four basic skills, which basic skills the students didn't like. When asked what basic skills students didn't really like, 5 students mentioned speaking and 5 students mentioned writing, for speaking, the respondents who didn't like speaking stated that the respondents didn't like speaking because students had difficulty pronouncing English words and because students were afraid of making mistakes when speaking. speak English, while for who don't like writing, it because it is difficult to write English words and make mistakes when writing English vocabulary.

“I don't like speaking because I have a bit of difficulty with pronunciation and I think English conversation is too fast”

“I don't like writing because I often make mistakes when writing...”

The researcher asked teacher how the teacher improved students' basic skills (Listening, Writing, Speaking and Reading). According to the respondents, to improve students' listening skills the respondent would use a method where the respondent would let the student hear the respondent's voice while speaking in English and the respondent would tell them to write what they hear afterward, whether the students would hear the word correctly or write the word correctly, in addition, this method can improve both listening skill and writing skill at the same time. According to the respondents, to improve students' speaking skills, the respondent would let the student practice reading aloud using simple dialog conversation by dividing the student into 2 groups party A and party B. By letting them have a practice conversation the respondent could assess student ability. According to the respondents, to improve student's reading skills, the respondent would let the student practice reading text that was written in their practice book, if there were a mistake the respondent would correct them while also evaluating their ability. According to the respondents, to improve students' writing skills, the method is the same as when the respondent used the method to improve student listening skills. The respondent will let the student hear the respondent's voice while speaking in English or audio given by the respondent and the respondent will tell them to write what they hear afterward, the student still learning so the respondent would let them hear the words by word to help them understand more.

When the researchers asked whether students liked vocabulary, 8 said that they liked it, and 2 said that they did not. Respondents who like vocabulary can better understand English conversations because they know more vocabulary and are easy to memorize. Meanwhile, respondents don't like vocabulary because it is difficult to memorize.

“I like vocabulary because I can understand English conversations better because I know more vocabulary.”

“I don't like it because it's a bit difficult to memorize”

Respondents have ways to increase their vocabulary, by frequently reading articles, books, novels, news, and English dictionaries, furthermore, they also like to watch English videos or films, play games, and communicate with foreigners to increase their English vocabulary.

"... by reading lots of articles and then talking to people who speak English because you can add new words."

"...increase vocabulary by watching films, and reading books."

"...watching English videos that have English subtitles..."

The researcher asked the teacher how to improve students' vocabulary. According to the respondent, to improve students' vocabulary, the respondent would usually use this method in which if there is new material, the respondent would analyze it first, for example in one learning unit material there are words that are often used. The respondent would teach the students and tell them to write it down in their textbook so that when they do the activity task in the practice book they can open the notes, they are like little dictionaries for the student.

When the researchers asked whether the respondents liked grammar, 5 students answered yes and 5 students answered no. Respondents who said they liked grammar gave the reason that respondents liked grammar because it was challenging and had a lot to memorize, while respondents who answered that they didn't like grammar were because according to respondents grammar had a lot of tenses formula and was difficult to memorize.

"I like grammar because it's quite challenging and requires a lot of memorization..."

"I don't like Grammars because there are too many tenses formulas and it's hard to memorize"

Researchers asked respondents how the respondents improved their grammar skills. According to respondents, the method used is by having English language books that provide a collection of grammar formulas, listening to people talking in English, practicing questions, memorizing grammar formulas, looking at English texts, and looking for grammar formulas on social media or on the internet to know how to use those grammar formulas.

"The way to improve my grammar skills is by having English language books that provide a collection of grammar formulas and listening to people who speak English, making me understand more about how to use grammar."

"The way to improve is by practicing questions, for example, if I don't understand, I can look for the formula on social media, or on the internet. Practicing questions is very helpful."

The researcher asked the teacher how to improve students' grammar. According to the respondents, to improve students' grammar, the respondent will teach the students in more detail, for example giving and teaching them the list of tenses formula that will be used in the learning unit material so they can understand it more.

4. Conclusion

The students' and English teachers' perceptions toward English lessons in elementary school were positive. The teacher thinks that English learning should be improved and it should be learned by the students who started not only from Elementary school but it would be better if they could start early like in kindergarten. Learning English from the elementary school level can help students to understand and get used to English. Students and teachers also think that English is important and useful for everyday life and the future. By learning English from an early age, students have more opportunities to gain broader knowledge from various media. From this research was found that teachers need to add activities to improve speaking and grammar skills because there are still students who think that speaking and grammar are difficult.

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