

Young Learners' Perception of Picture as Motivation Booster in English as Foreign Language

Febiyanti Liza Riani

Muhimatul Ifadah*

Dodi Mulyadi

Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang
Semarang
muhimatul@unimus.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Young learners' awareness of learning English in many places are still interesting to be investigated in Indonesia since in the elementary school, English sometimes taught and some other institution decided to not taught it for some reasons. The study was designed to investigate the student's perception of picture to help them in boosting motivation in learning English as a foreign language. In addition, they were being affirmed to elaborate their engagement in the classroom. The phenomena were observed and questionnaire were managed to get the data. From the study it was found that student's motivation is improving, revealed from the observation and the questionnaire's result. The students' engagement in learning English was more dynamic and the classroom atmosphere become more joyful. Further, it can be interpreted that they were become more enthusiastic and stimulated when learning English. Supporting these facts, they affirmed that learning English was best experienced whenever the teacher used an interesting media, choosing a fun topic, and giving them chance to compete with their classmates.

Keywords: students' perception, learning booster, foreign language

INTRODUCTION

The debates concerning the ideal age of onset for foreign language learning continues. Though teaching English to young learners is often viewed as challenging because of the characteristics of these learners

(Cameron, 2003) such as inability to understand abstract concepts or short attention span. On the other hand, many research revealed the advantages of early start to learning English, such as young learners' lower affective filters, their ability to acquire the sounds and rhythms of the foreign languages faster, the longer time they can spend on learning languages, and their potential to develop higher awareness of intercultural identity (Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979; Damar, Gürsoy, & Korkmaz, 2013). Though, English as a foreign language for young learners will always become a topic that debatable since many authorities have different perspectives about it, particularly in Indonesia.

Indonesian government began introducing English as early as possible for students in Elementary School (SD) or Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) through the 1994 basic education curriculum. Since implementing the curriculum, English subjects are local lessons taught starting in 4th grade (Sekolah Dasar/ Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) level. In fact, English is a compulsory subject until now- as a matter of curriculum policy. Because of its status as an elective subject, the level of implementation is various for each institution. Some schools teach it in the fourth grade, and some others teach it from the first grade of elementary school, meanwhile at MI Muhammadiyah Kranggan is taught since 2nd grade, as the subject the research.

Therefore, learning English as an international language is introduced as early English is one of the subjects that is considered difficult for elementary school students. Several things cause the difficulties they experience in learning English. One of them is the students' family background and life, which makes them less or even unfamiliar with the use of English in everyday life. It is rarely for them to have the opportunity to hear, read and speak English words or sentences in their daily lives. Hence, the students feel hard to master English, especially related to vocabulary acquisition, as the early things to be learnt. For some reasons, English teachers in many institutions were not those with the qualification in teaching English, as its consequence, the learning process is affected by many factors, such as the teachers, the students, the facilities, the learning atmosphere, and many others.

Realizing the facts, it cannot be said that the success of English learning is defined by single factors, but in the opposite. Teacher's methodology, strategy, or approach in English course for some reasons can affect students' motivation, and sometimes, affect the students' achievement.

Autonomous and controlled motivation are two motivation types determined by self-determination theory (SDT). SDT is a pragmatic macro-theory of motivation that focuses on social and classroom factors and has been successfully applied in several educational settings (Alamer & Lee, 2019; Legault, 2017; Noels et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Based on this

statement, it can be concluded that the classroom atmosphere is significantly affect the students' motivation and responses in a course. The more comfortable a classroom situation, the more benefit for the teaching process. Further, a teacher would always do the best for their students, and one decision from making their teaching is optimum, is by choosing media that help the teaching run well.

Sadiman (2010), the use of learning media in general, including the use of picture media properly can be useful for clarify the message that is too verbalistic, overcoming the limitations of space, time, and senses. Further, the use of varied and appropriate media can overcome the passive attitude of students, and teacher can help student by the same perception and concept from the explanation. In addition, media give more good sides of teaching because it represents the se following nature; picture is able to attract students' attention, it also helps teacher to minimize boredom because of verbal communication delivery only. The other good things of picture are it can lead students to do observation, demonstration, and others.

METHOD

Through observation and questionnaire, the data was gathered to support the study. 15 students of 4th grader of MI Muhammadiyah Kranggan were observed during the process of learning, how their engagement in the English class. The observation sheet was used to see all engagement performed during the process, particularly from their motivation in participating in the course. However, interview was also being used to support the hypothesis, elaborated their views about their motivation of joining English class based on their experience and their personal perspectives. The questionnaire was delivered to the students to get the data about their perception in picture usage in learning English. 20 questions were given to seek the data from the students in presenting their perception about it.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Perception about the Use of Picture

From the questionnaire, the data showed that most of them are very interested to the use of picture in learning foreign language. 86% of the students affirmed that picture ease their comprehension in memorizing the word and its meaning. Further, they also revealed that picture can help them in simplifying the meaning of the words in English. The way teacher delivered the topic and the way it is explained was also become beneficial for them since they become less anxious in participating the learning activities. Picture help them to get the

meaning of words that sometimes could not be found in their surroundings. They gave responses from the questionnaire that their fear of learning English might be reduced. They said that the concept of English as a foreign language that only those with high thinking ability was not totally right. The way teacher explain in more simple way aided by picture might help them in enjoying the process of learning become interesting and stimulate their curiosity to learn more words. Findings related to students' perceptions of learning English aided pictures as the media seen revealed that on average 67% of students "strongly agree" and "agree" they are become enthusiastic in learning English. In general, more than half of them "strongly" agree" and "agree" that 33% of them still have difficulty in pronouncing the words due to the uncertainty about the spelling and the meaning of the words. In addition, 93% of them "strongly agree" and "agree" that the use of pictures is the easiest media to learn English words and 87% of them "strongly agree" and "agree" that the use of pictures is interesting and help them to overcome the boredom and the anxiety. Further, media enhance their memory related to learning English vocabulary, because the teacher was always giving instruction to memorize the words first and it's meaning as well.

The questionnaire was also revealed the information about the students' expectation in learning foreign language. The chance of competing with their classmate become an interesting activity in learning English. They thought that learning simple things such as nouns and adjectives was challenging whenever they are given chance to show their best effort in the class, and they like to be appreciated. Further, they revealed that learning English should be started by its function- in another word, contextualized. They need to know when and where English would be used, and what if they did not learn English.

The phenomena taught us that young learners need also to learn about the context of language used, particularly the foreign language. This fact was very beneficial since the students' perception in the classroom will also affects their engagement in the process of learning. Many words are learned but whenever they need to be used, the students were not able to use since they never use it and they never thought that learning English as foreign language will be used immediately in their life.

Students' Motivation Seen from Their Engagement in The Classroom

From the discussion above, it can be said that there was a change and improvement in the motivation to learn English vocabulary for the 4th grade students of MI Muhammadiyah Kranggan in English subjects from cycle I to cycle II. In the first cycle the motivation to learn English for the fourth-grade students of MI Muhammadiyah Kranggan was moderate and in the second cycle it increased to a high category. It can be said that the increase of motivation to learn English is caused one of them- by the use of media, particularly picture, in tis study. Increasing students' motivation to learn language by using picture media is an absolute need. This is stated because the pictures that were applied in learning English are considered by students to be very interesting. From the classroom engagement, the picture was used help students to raise their

enthusiasm in answering the teacher's questions, responding their classmate's inability in answering the questions from the teacher, and raise the teamwork between them.

The findings strongly support that the use of pictures has a contribution to students in learning vocabulary, especially passive vocabulary. Based on these results, there are significant differences between each cycle. This also means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. The students were very active to answering the teacher's questions in turn. Only two students that not really enthusiastic as others. They seemed to follow their classmates' activities, repeating the others' answer and sometimes answering the teacher's instruction. For the last two meetings, all students were actively engaged in the classroom. Teacher's instruction and assessment (verbally) was actively answered by the students. They also gave some suggestion to give bigger and more colorful picture in all topic, and the teacher respond it by explanation that not all topic can be represented by picture. Some students were willing to replace their classmates' position whenever teacher giving instruction and the students could not answer it.

CONCLUSION

The students revealed that picture help them in raising their enthusiasm, and their interest in learning English as foreign language. Their interest stimulated them to memorize the words and its meaning in more comfortable way. They affirmed that their previous concept or stigma about English was quite incorrect. They have more joy when they learn concrete things rather than the abstract, and picture help them to get those, especially learning nouns and adjectives. Further, they confessed that their motivation is quite high particularly when the teacher uses big, nice, and colourful picture in explaining things. The more teacher is fun, the more interesting the English class. In addition, when they are motivated, they were also having more enthusiasm in competing with their classmates., and it is more challenging when they were given chance to do so in the classroom. From what had been observed and reported, the study jog our memory that teacher might become the most significant factor in bringing the learning atmosphere to be amusing and delightful for young learners in learning English. These natures would always need some teacher's awareness in choosing the suitable media in teaching foreign language. Further, the school need to investigate the students' and teacher's need to be able provide the facilities for striving the optimum result of English teaching. The facilities are not only about the media, but also about the reliable strategy, activity, and method that managed by the teacher through supervision and support from the school.

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