

Gunawan Tambunsaribu (An Overview of Students' and Teachers' Factors, and Students' Perspectives Towards Teachers' Characters in English Learning)

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An Overview of Students' and Teachers' Factors, and Students' Perspectives Towards Teachers' Characters in English Learning

Gunawan Tambunsaribu^{1✉} and Ida Bugus Putu Suamba²

¹Faculty of Letters, Universitas Kristen Indonesia

²Jurusan Administrasi Niaga Politeknik Negeri Bali

✉ Jln. Mayjend. Sutoyo No.2, Cawang-13630. Jakarta Timur., Indonesia

✉ gunawanreza_tamsar@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at examining some factors that led college students to find difficulties in understanding English lessons. The method used by researchers in this study was a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The research instrument used in this study were video recorders and open-ended question sheets. The primary data in this study were the respondents' answers to some questions delivered to them in the interview session. The respondents were the first-year students of batch 2018 at Gunadarma University located in Bekasi, West Java province. The researcher randomly selected 400 students who were studying English 1 and English 2 subjects. It was found that the factors that caused the English learners still find some difficulties in learning English were caused by both internal and external factors. This study also revealed that some students had some bad experiences with their English teachers since they started learning English in kindergarten or primary school. Therefore, this study implies that the teaching process of English should be carefully carried out in the classroom to ensure that students are comfortable learning English.

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INTRODUCTION

Finding and understanding the students' learning difficulties is known as the diagnostic concept of learning difficulties. Harriman (1980) stated that diagnosis is an analysis of abnormalities or maladjustment of the pattern of symptoms. Diagnosis is the process of examining things that are seen as wrong or problematic. So, it can be concluded that diagnosis is determining the types of problems or disorders by examining the background of the causes or by analyzing the happening symptoms.

Wijaya (2010) stated that learning difficulties are categorized into four types. These four types are a) dyslexia (difficulty to remember letters); b) dyscalculia (difficult to recognize numbers); c) attention deficit hyperactive disorder (difficulty in focusing on the problems that are being faced); and d) spatial, motor, and perceptual deficits (has a weak condition in assessing themselves according to the size of space and time). Womack et al., (2011) stated that there are four criteria to be considered when identifying students with learning disabilities: academic difficulties, the discrepancy between potential and achievement, exclusion of other factors, and neuropsychological disorder.

Irham & Wiyani (2013) stated that the difficulties experienced by students in the learning process indicate that there is a gap between the expected academic achievement and what is achieved by students. Hamalik (1983) also stated that the student's difficulties in the learning process are considered disorders that can hinder the student's learning progress and can also lead to failure of the student's achievement. Abdurrahman (2003) stated that learning difficulties can be divided into two major groups, namely developmental learning disabilities and academic learning disabilities. In line with that, Ahmadi and Supriyono (2004) explained the factors which cause some learning difficulties namely internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are the factors that come from within the humans themselves namely physiological and psychological factors, while external factors are the factors that include social and non-social factors.

Ahmadi and Supriyono (2004) stated that the characteristics of a teacher that can cause students to experience difficulties in learning are as follows: 1) a teacher who is less competent in teaching and choosing learning methods in the learning process; 2) a teacher who has a poor engagement to the students. The characteristics of this kind of teacher are usually easy to be angry, authoritarian, arrogant, incompetent in explaining the material, stingy in giving good grades to the students, and other negative attitudes towards the students; and 3) a teacher who sets and demands a high standard for the student learning success that beyond to the students' abilities.

Some factors that come from a teacher that affect students' understanding of a lesson taught to them are various. Some of the factors are inspiring and informed teachers (Jan 2017), motivation and performance of academic teachers (Kulikowski et al., 2022), the effectiveness of teacher's teaching methods (Paramita et.al., 2021), teacher's motivation (Fahik & Santosa, 2021), teachers' skill in delivering the lesson (Sausan et.al., 2018), quality of teachers' characters (Sabardila et.al., 2020), teacher as a facilitator or motivator (Wiangsima & Boon, 2018), and others. Sabardila et.al., (2020) stated that positive characteristics of a teacher are responsible, patient, caring, easy to understand, fair, smart, and creative while some negative characteristics of a teacher are ferocity, fear, and anger, difficulty to comprehend, and flirty.

A teacher's competencies and attitudes as well impact his students' ability in understanding the materials given to them. Students' self-images and their behaviour during the learning process are surely affected by the competencies of the teachers in the classroom (Ashton, 1984; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; McIlrath, 1995). The quality of instructions or the behaviour of the teacher in the classroom during the students' learning time affect the students' academic performance (Carroll, 1963; Cruickshank, 1985). The climates such as attitudes, norms, beliefs, and prejudices, which surround the students during the learning process, also impact the students' materials

receiving. Some factors including student characteristics, race, gender, economic level, and past academic performance influence the school's social climate (Proctor, 1984).

Each student of course wants to have comfortable school climates and good teachers as well. An effective teacher is a good teacher. An effective teacher should have characteristics such as good, ideal, competent, expert, dutiful, respected, analytical, reflective, satisfying, and diversity of responses (Watson, et al., 2010; Cruickshank (as cited by Huitt (2006)). "Review of literature concerning teacher behaviour in the classroom attest the fact that teacher affect influences teacher effectiveness" (Dar, 2015).

Relates to this study, previous research entitled "The relationship between teacher self-efficacy and violence toward students as mediated by teacher's attitude" aimed at examining if there was any physical and verbal maltreatment of students by their teachers in the learning process. This previous study found out there was physical violence and verbal violence done by some teachers toward a student in the classroom (Kassabri, 2012; OECD, 2009). This study is still related to the previous study mentioned above but this study generally aims at examining any factors that cause college students still find difficulties in learning English including if there are any bad things experienced by the students related to their teachers' characters in the classroom. Based on the two previous pieces of research mentioned above, this current research was conducted to find out specific kinds of students' factors, teachers' factors, and also teachers' characters that led the students to have difficulties in understanding English lessons.

METHODS

A qualitative method with a descriptive approach was employed in this study. This research was about finding out students' perspectives towards their English teachers' influences and the attitudes in their English classes. The primary data in this study were the respondents' answers to some questions delivered to them in the interview session. The respondents were the first-year students of batch 2018 at Gunadarma University located in Bekasi, West Java province. The researcher randomly selected 500 students who were studying English 1 and English 2 subjects. The tools used in this study were video recorders and open-ended question sheets. To validate the data taken, the researcher chose only the data from the questionnaires filled out and fully handed in by the respondents. There were only 400 hundred questionnaires that were filled out by the respondents. After collecting all the questionnaires, the researcher read as well as underlined specific answers given by the respondents related to their English instructors' attitudes that affected their disabilities in understanding English lessons. In the next step, the researcher listened to the recording of the interview session of all the 400 respondents chosen. While listening to the recording, the researcher typed the answers of each respondent related to their English teachers' attitudes (external factor) which led them to have difficulties in students in understanding English lessons. For a specific data collection, the collected data were organized using an Excel spreadsheet for grouping the contents. The data were grouped into three categories based on the topic discussed. The data thus collected were then analyzed using thematic analysis, they are an internal factor, external factor, and the characteristics of English teachers that caused students to experience difficulties in learning English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First of all, before the researcher explains in detail the answers to the two problems of this research, the researcher will show brief information about the respondents' identities as follows.

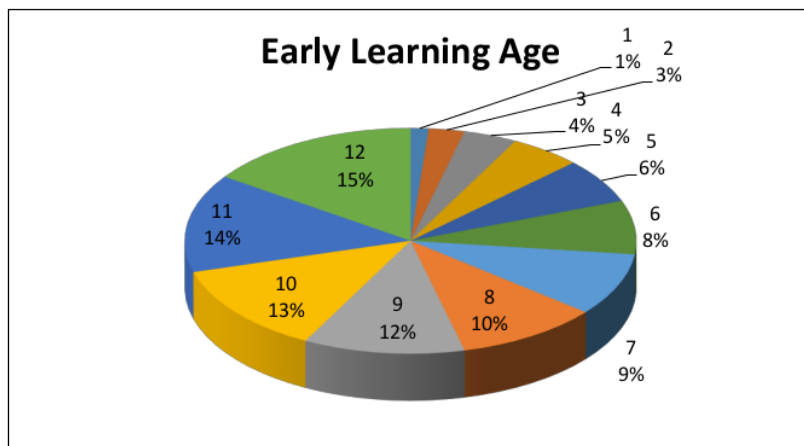


Chart 1: Respondents' age when they learn English for the first time

The chart above (chart1) describes the percentage of respondents' initial age when they started to learn English for the first time in their lives. As many as 101 out of 400 (25.25%) respondents stated that they have started studying English since they were in kindergarten when they were 1 until 5 years old. It can be concluded that they have learned English for more than 13 years. As many as 286 out of 400 respondents (71.5%), the highest number, stated that they have learned or more than 12 years since they learned English for the first time at the age of 6 or seven. Only 13 of 400 respondents (3.25) started to learn English at the age of 12 years old. It can be concluded that as many as 96.75% of the respondents, who have difficulties in learning English, have learned English for more than 10 years.

The following chart (chart 2) describes the data on respondents' level of formal education when they started to learn English for the first time.

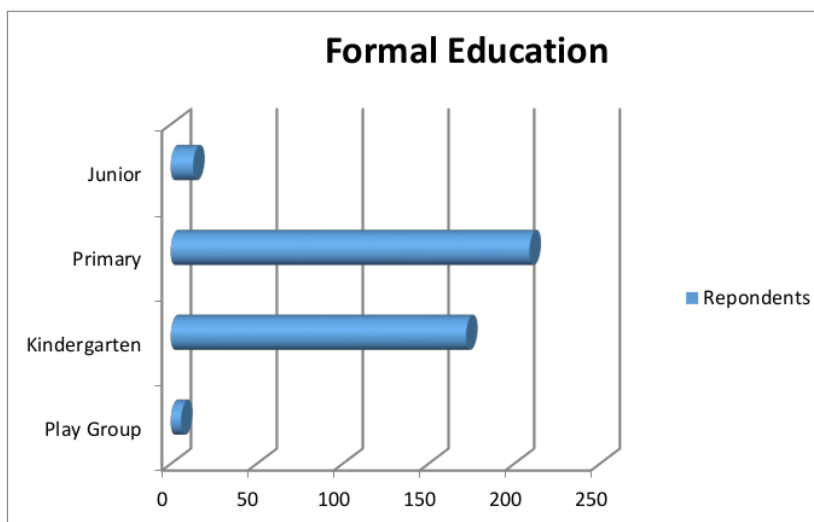


Chart 2: Respondent's level of formal education when they learn English for the first time

Chart 2 above shows the level of the respondents' s formal education when they learned English for the first time.

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Numbers (Respondents)</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Female</i>	248	62
<i>Male</i>	152	38
Total	400	100

4
 Table 1: Sexes of Respondents

Table 1 above shows the respondents in this research are 248 female students and 152 male students.

<i>Age</i>	<i>Numbers (Respondents)</i>
17	56
18	72
19	163
20	38
21	25
22-30	46
TOTAL	400

4
 Table 2: Age of Respondents

Table 2 above shows the age range of the respondents who participated in this research. The range of the respondents' age was 17 to 30 years old. The respondents were college students in Gunadarma university located in Bekasi, West Java province, Indonesia.

3.1 External Factor (Teachers' Factor)

Based on the respondents' responses, the researcher found some teacher factors that cause students to find it difficult to learn English so far.

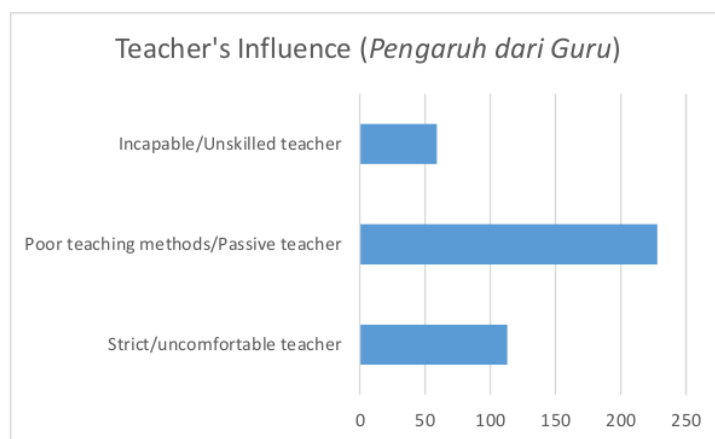


Chart 3: Teacher's Influence (External Factors)

The above chart (chart 3) shows the percentage of teacher factors on the students' disabilities in understanding English lessons. From the interview sessions, the respondents informed that they had experienced some bad experiences with their English teachers' attitudes in the learning process which made them face difficulties in understanding English lessons. Of all the problems they raised at the time of the interview, the authors grouped the problems they encountered while interacting with their English teachers into 3 main problems. First, they stated that the teachers were not pleasant (strict and uncomfortable teachers). Second, they mentioned that their English teachers' teaching methods were less interactive (passive teacher/unmotivated teachers). Third, the respondents stated that their English teachers were not experts in teaching English lessons (incapable/unskilled teachers).

3.2 Internal Factor (Students' Factor)

The following chart (chart 4) describes the percentage of the influence of the students' own willingness to speak English. In the interview session, the students said that several factors came from themselves. The researcher groups the respondents' answers into three main answers related to these internal factors. First, they think that English was a very confusing subject. Secondly, they just did not like English. Third, they said that English was less important than the other subjects they had in college.

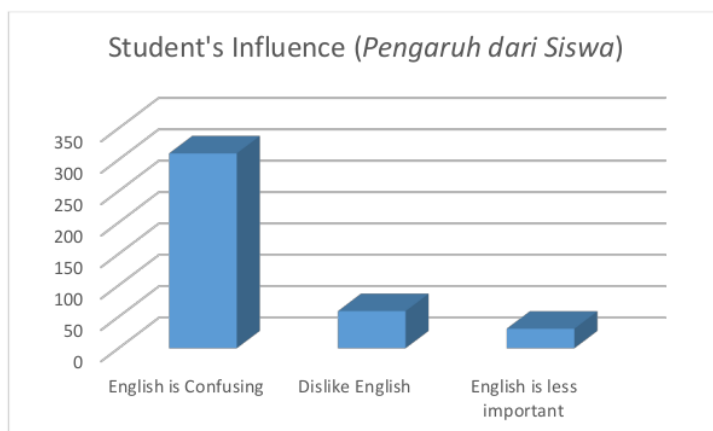


Chart 4: The Willingness/Initiative of the Students (Internal Factors)

⁵ Internal factors that cause students to have difficulty in understanding English lessons are as follows:

- a) they think that English is a very confusing subject. As many as 77% of the respondents said that English lesson is difficult and confusing.
- b) they just don't like English lessons. As many as 15% of the respondents stated that they did not like English very much. This happens because the English lesson is very difficult to understand—related to point 'a' which stated that English is a very confusing subject.
- c) As many as 8% of the respondents said that English is not important in their future.

² 3.3 Characteristics of English Teachers that Caused Students to Experience Difficulties in Learning English

¹⁷ The result of the question “Do you have any bad experiences with your English teachers in the English learning process?” in the interview session showed that 53% of the respondents said ‘yes’ and 47% said ‘no’.

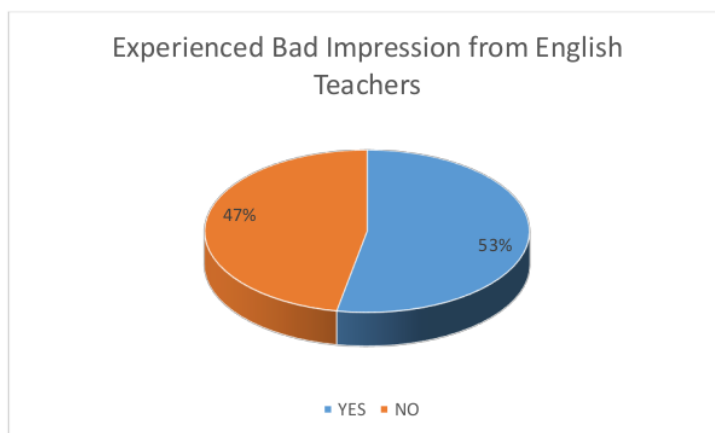


Chart 5: Students' Percentage of Having Bad Experiences towards their English Teachers' Characters

The chart above showed that as many as 53% (213 out of 400 respondents) experienced bad experiences or bad impressions got from their English teachers during the teaching and learning process while as many as 47% said that they did not have any bad experiences or bad impressions got from their English teachers while they were learning English in the classroom.

Of the students who got bad experiences, the researcher found that as many as 55% said that their English teachers were authoritarian. The teachers did not give time for the students to give feedback during the learning process. The teachers taught them using a one-way teaching method. Most of their English teachers only asked them to memorize vocabulary, sentence formulas, and other topics. As many as 37% of the respondents mentioned that their English teachers were easy to be angry when the students could not answer some questions given to them correctly. The others, 8% of the respondents, mentioned that their English teachers were arrogant and also demanded high scores for the students that were beyond the students' abilities.

From the findings, it is found that both student's and teacher's factors affect the students' abilities in understanding English lessons. In addition, the students' low positive perspective toward their teachers had led the students to find difficulties in learning English. Teachers' negative characteristics such as authoritarianism, easy to be angry, passive, arrogant, and many others affected the students' performance in understanding English lessons in their learning process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research finding, the researcher concludes that many factors cause some English learners still find some difficulties in learning English subjects until now are caused by both internal and external factors. This study revealed that some students had some bad experiences with their English teachers as long as they have studied English since they started learning English from kindergarten or elementary school until they are in higher education. As many as 53% of the respondents said that they had a bad experience from the teachers' attitudes and the teachers' methods of teaching English during the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

The researcher hopes that this research can be read especially by English Instructors and other teachers, in general, to increase and develop their teaching methods and strategies to make their students can develop and increase their English knowledge and English skills. This research can be also used by other researchers who want to continue research about students' and teachers' perspectives in the teaching-learning process on other courses. This research can be also helpful for the students generally in understanding other students' perspectives in the English learning process in finding their solutions to overcome their problems in English course classes.

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