

# Review of Students perception and Students' Learning Preferences in Learning English at SDN 1 Sembayat

Ma'rifatul Ummah  
SDN 1 Sembayat  
Jl. Embong Baru No. 1 Sembayat  
E-mail : iephakhey@yahoo.com

Received: July 10, 2017

Accepted: August 17, 2017

Published: August 31, 2017

## Abstract

Teaching English is not only about giving structure or asking student to memorize some vocabularies. The more important thing is encourage the learners to use English on their daily communication. Because English is a foreign language for students in Indonesia, teacher should provide a suitable environment and support the students to practice their language. In order to create an appropriate learning environment, it is important for the teacher to know the students perception and their learning preference in learning English. The participant of this study is students in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade of SDN 1 Sembayat. The data was obtained through a yes-no questionnaire and analyzed descriptively using SPSS. The result of this study suggest the teacher to implement an activity based teaching-learning techniques such as TPR, games, and project in order to make an effective language teaching.

**Key notes:** learning preferences, students perception, learning English, young learners.

## 1. Introduction

In Indonesia, English start to be taught at elementary school. It was introduced since 1994 through the Decree No.1702/104/M/1994. In Elementary school, English was taught as a local content. As an International language, English plays important rule in communication because every aspect in globalization era use English as its instructional language. As a foreign language, English is considered to be difficult subject among students in Indonesia because it is not used in their daily language, Rokhayani (2012). The students in elementary school are unusual with the language although some kindergarten or even play group used English. Besides, the way to pronounce the language is different from what was written and sometimes it is confusing for some students who are not familiar with the language. So, learning English is not easy especially for young learners.

There are many statements about who the young learners are. Harmanto (2011) stated that the category of young learner referred to the National System of Education Act No.20/2003 item (1) of article 6 is students between seven to twelve years old who enter the basic education. According to Purwaningsih in Prasetia (2011) young learners are learners in Elementary school aging 9-10 years old who are learning English as a foreign language. Based on Scott and Ytreberg (1990) in Harmanto (2011), young learners are between five and ten or eleven years old. Moreover, this study defines young learners are the children between 7 – 12 years old who learn English at elementary school.

Teaching English for young learners is challenging because the characteristics of the young learner is different from adult. Young learners have their own characteristics in learning language. Since young learners love to play, teachers should provide meaningful activities to make the students being involved and enjoy the learning process. It is quite difficult for the teachers to ask young learners to sit down and listen the teacher's explanation because basically young learners need physical movements and real activities to stimulate their thinking. Young learners also respond the language through concrete thing rather than abstract things. It is important for the teachers to provide suitable learning environment which support the language learning because they will learn well through something that is close to their culture. Thus, teachers should use appropriate media and technique based on the students' ability to give the best quality of teaching English to the children.

In the implementation of English learning in SDN 1 Sembayat, teacher faces some problems while introducing English in the classroom. The most reason is because English is not their mother tongue. It needs more time for the student to translate teacher's language and understand what the teacher said. Besides, students are unfamiliar with English, and their English vocabulary is limited. It sometimes force the teacher to use direct translating or sometimes using bilingual teaching, even use their mother tongue, to explain some terms or introduce new topics. In other hand, the interruption of mother tongue creates lots of problems in learning English, Aziz, Asma A. et.al. (2015). It can disturb the students'

understanding about the use of English to communicate. The teacher also trapped to focus on the students writing and vocabulary rather than speaking because at the end of English teaching always measured by a written test, such as: doing worksheet, exercise or final test, to know the learners achievement and progress (Anwar & Arifani 2016; Arifani, 2016; Asari, Ma'rifah, & Arifani, 2017; Asmara, Anwar, & Muhammad, 2016).

Another problem is that students do not see the importance of English for their real life. Since English is not their own language and their environment does not support them to communicate in English, the students become less enthusiastic in learning English. It is important for the teacher to involve the students in the learning activity, create suitable environment and provide more opportunity for the students to practice their English. Moreover, teacher of English young learner should provide some techniques which appropriate to fulfill the needs of the young learners. In order to decide a suitable technique, teachers need to know what the learners need and what their preference in learning English. As Nunan, (1989) in Bada, Erdogan & Okan, Zuhul (2000) points out that accommodating learner's needs and preferences is vital in designing a learners-centered curriculum. Therefore, this study is aim to find how the learners perceptions of learning English and how the learners learning preference in learning English at SDN 1 Sembayat.

## 2. Methods

This study is a qualitative research. The population is students at SDN 1 Sembayat from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The subjects who participated in this study are 46 students (25 female and 21 male) from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade of SDN 1 Sembayat. The participant of the study is students with minimum 2+ years of English learning. The students ranged between 9 – 12 years old.

The data for this study was collected from a questionnaire, adapted from Bada, Erdogan & Okan, Zuhul (2000). The questionnaire is aimed to know how the students' view about learning English and their learning preference, including their working style, ways of learning, vocabulary learning, error correction, media preference, and assessment of language performance. The data was analyzed using SPSS. Binomial-non parametric is used to describe the answer of the research question. The data will be explained descriptively.

## 3. Result

Presented here are the results of the questionnaire. There are 14 questions distributed to the subject to know their perception in learning English and their learning preference. The first item asks whether the students like or dislike English. Item 2 asks about students' opinion about English as a subject at school. Item 3 asks about students' opinion about English learning at their classroom. Item 4 asks students opinion whether the teacher should use English, bilingual or Indonesian in teaching English.

**Table 1. Students' perception in learning English**

No.	Statements	Yes	%	No	%	Std. Deviation
1.	Do you like learning English?	23	50	23	50	.506
2.	Do you think English subject is:					
	a. easy?	19	41	27	59	.498
	b. difficult?	22	48	24	52	.505
3.	Is learning English in your school:					
	a. interesting?	26	57	20	43	.501
	b. confusing?	11	24	35	76	.431
	c. boring?	7	15	39	85	.363
4.	What language do you like your teacher use in learning English?					
	a. using English?	11	24	35	76	.431
	b. using bilingual?	32	70	14	30	.465
	c. using Indonesian?	23	50	23	50	.506

The table above shows the students perception in learning English. Statement 1 shows that 50% students like learning English. Statement 2 shows that 41% students think that English is easy and 48% students think that English is difficult. Statement 3 shows that 57% students feel that English is interesting, 24% students feel English is confusing, and 15% students feel English is boring. Statement 4 shows that 24% students like if the teachers use English in the classroom, 70% students prefer the use of bilingual language, and 50% students want the teacher use Indonesian.

Item 5, 6 and 7 ask about students frequency in learning English inside and outside the school. The result is shown in the table below.

Table 2. Frequency in learning English

No.	Statements	Yes	%	No	%	Std. Deviation
1.	How often do you listen/read/watch film in English?					
	a. Every day	2	4	44	96	
	b. 3 times a week	11	24	35	76	.206
	c. in English classroom	41	89	5	11	.431 .315
2.	How often do you communicate in English?					
	a. Every day	4	9	42	91	.285
	b. 3 times a week	5	11	41	89	.315
	c. in English lesson classroom	36	78	10	22	.417
3.	Are you joining an English course outside the school?	15	33	31	67	.474

This table shows the frequency of the students in learning English. This is aimed to know how often the students engage with English environment. Statement 1 in table above shows that 4% students' listen/read/watch film in English every day, 24% students listen/read/watch film in English 3 times a week, and 89% students listen/read/watch English film on English classroom. Statement 2 shows that 9 % students communicate in English every day, 11 % students communicate in English 3 times a week and 78% students communicate in English on English lesson. It means the opportunity of the students to use English is mostly in the classroom only. Statement 3 shows that 33% students join English course outside the school.

Item 8 asks about language difficulties in learning English. It covers the difficulties in pronunciation, writing, speaking, listening, reading, and understanding the language.

Table 3. Language difficulties

Options	Yes	%	No	%	Std. Deviation
a. in pronouncing English word/sentence	35	76	11	24	.431
b. in writing English	26	57	20	42	.501
c. in speaking English	30	65	16	35	.482
d. in listening English word/sentence	20	43	26	57	.501
e. in reading English word/sentence	32	70	14	30	.465
f. in understanding English word/sentence	22	52	22	48	.505

The table above shows there are 76% students have difficulties in pronouncing English word/sentence, 57% students have difficulties in writing English, 65% students have difficulties in speaking English, 43% students have difficulties in listening English word/sentence, 70% students have difficulties in reading English word/sentence, and 52% students have difficulties in understanding English word/sentence.

Item 9 asks about students preference in doing activity in the classroom. The result is drawn below.

Table 4. Working Styles

Options	Yes	%	No	%	Std. Deviation
a. individually	18	39	28	61	.493
b. in pairs	29	63	17	37	.488
c. in small groups	30	65	16	35	.482
d. in large groups	29	63	17	37	.488

From the table above, the result suggests that students prefer to work in small groups, 65%, and in pairs or in large groups, 63%, than working individually, 39%.

Item 10 asks about students preference on the way of learning English. Every student have different way of learning. Some students can learn something by visual, musical/auditory, verbal, physical/kinesthetic, logical/mathematical, sicoal, or solitary. The result will be described below.

Table 5. Ways of Learning

Options	Yes	%	No	%	Std. Deviation
a. listening	36	78	10	22	.417
b. reading	30	65	16	35	.482
c. copying from the board	41	89	5	11	.315
d. listening and taking notes	26	57	20	43	.501
e. reading and making notes	24	52	22	48	.505
f. repeating what you hear	35	76	11	24	.431
g. making summaries	11	24	35	76	.431

89% of students prefer learning by copying from the board, 78% students prefer listening, 76% students prefer learning by repeating what they hear, 65% likes reading, 57% likes listening and taking notes, 52% likes reading and making notes, and 24% likes making summaries. Those imply that students are driven to be passive learners. This is not good for the development of students competences. The teacher should implement an appropriate teaching method to make the students become more active in learning the language.

Another important thing in learning English is vocabulary. Item 11 asks the students about how do they learn new vocabulary. The result is described below.

Table 6. Vocabulary Learning

Options	Yes	%	No	%	Std. Deviation
a. using new words in a sentence	20	43	26	57	.501
b. saying or writing words several times	12	26	34	74	.444
c. looking the real object	32	70	14	30	.465
d. memorizing the word	22	48	24	52	.505

Table 6 shows students preference in vocabulary learning. 70% students prefer learning vocabulary by looking the real object, 48% students learning new vocabulary by memorizing, 43% students use it in a sentence, and 26% students say or write the new words several times.

Item 12 asks the students about how they want to be corrected if they make some errors. The result is shown in table 7.

Table 7. Error correction

Options	Yes	%	No	%	Std. Deviation
a. immediately, in front of everyone	5	11	41	89	.315
b. later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone	10	22	36	78	.417
c. later, in private	30	65	16	35	.482

Table 7 shows the students preference of error correction in language learning. It is about how they would prefer to be corrected by their teacher. The result shows 65% students like to be corrected in private. However, 33% of students do not mind having their teacher correct them publicly.

Item 13 asks about media preference. The result shows that 67% students like learning using picture/poster and 63% students like learning using television video. The data is shown in table 8.

Table 8. Media Preference

Options	Yes	%	No	%	Std. Deviation
a. television/video/films	29	63	17	37	.488
b. radio	6	13	40	87	.341
c. written material	20	43	26	57	.501
d. pictures/posters	31	67	15	33	.474

Item 14 asks about students preference of in assessment of language performance. The result shows 59% students find out their English improvement through written task and 28% students through the use of their language in their real life situations. The data is shown below.

Table 9. Assessment of Language Performance

Options	Yes	%	No	%	Std. Deviation
a. written task set by the teacher	27	59	19	41	.498
b. using the language you have learnt in real-life situations	13	28	33	72	.455

#### 4. Discussion

This study investigated the students' perception and their preference in learning English. Although English is considered as a difficult subject, the result shows that 50% of the students of SDN 1 Sembayat like learning English. It means students have positive attitude in learning English. 41% students thought that English subject is easy and 48% of the students thought that English subject is difficult. The difficulties faced by students in learning English is mostly in pronouncing English word (76%), reading (79%), speaking (65%), writing (57%), understanding English word/ sentence (52%), and listening(43%). Thus, English teacher should create learning activity that help the student to overcome their difficulties. The teacher should also create such pleasant activity to make the students being motivated in learning English.

In learning English, it is important to give opportunity to the students to practice their language. The result of this study shows that student does not have enough opportunity to use English because their opportunity is mostly in English classroom. It is about 9% of students who communicate in English every day, 11 % of students speak in English 3 times a week, and 78% of student speak English in English classroom. The teacher should provide such kind of supportive environment and encourage their students to practice their language. It is contrary with the students' preference of the language used by the teacher in introducing English in the classroom. 70% of students prefer the teacher to use bilingual, 50% of students prefer the teacher to use Indonesian, and 24% of students prefer the teacher to use English. The interference of mother tongue do not expected in learning language because it will bother the student language construction of the target language. So the students should comprehend that in learning language, it is important to have supportive environments, one of them is by using the target language in the classroom.

Based on the result of this study, Students of SDN 1 Sembayat tend to work in pairs (63%) and in small or large group (65% and 63%) rather than work individually (39%). Students will perform better if they work together with their friends. They will have more time to discuss and use the language. Talking about the ways of learning, students at SDN 1 Sembayat likes learning by copying from the board (89% of students). Another likes learning by listening (78% of students) and repeating what they hear (76% o students). At his situation, students become passive learners in learning language. So, the teacher should change the teaching method to be more students-centered learning. Moreover, the students also like learning vocabulary through the presence of real object (70% of students). This study also shows that 67% of students prefer picture/posters as media in learning English. Another 63% of students like learning through television/video, and others 43% of students like learning from written material. It suggests the teacher to collect various materials such as pictures, dolls, or something that imitate the real object. The teacher also can implement some techniques such as role play to imitate the real situations.

In the implementation of learning language, errors can sometimes happen among the students. It is important for the teacher to correct it in order to make students performance be better. The important thing is how to correct the errors without make the students feel frustrate and inhibit. The result shows that 65% of the students prefer errors correcting privately. In line with this, the assessment of language performance also needs to be clarified. It is about 59% of students assess their improvement by written task by the teacher and about 28% of students assess their improvement by using their language in their real-life situation.

## 5. Conclusion

In teaching language process, teachers play an important role in creating the suitable learning environment that help the learners develop their language skills perfectly. Teaching English for young learners requires more effort since young learners have different characteristics from adult in learning language. Knowing students perception and learning preference can help the teacher to determine an appropriate technique that can support teaching and learning process. The findings of this study can be concluded as follow:

1. Although some students (41%) considered English as difficult subject, the amount of students who like and dislike English is quite same (50%).
2. Students' frequency in practicing their English is limited. Therefore, the teacher should give more opportunity to use English in the classroom.
3. Students face difficulties in pronouncing English words, reading, and speaking in English.
4. The teacher can provide pictures/posters, video, and another activities that imitate a real-life situation to learn vocabulary.
5. Teacher are expected to implement some techniques that require the students to work with their friends in a small or large group to support their learning.

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