# Teachers' and Students' Perception on Acquiring English Vocabulary for Young Learners Using Mobile Apps in EFL Context

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## Abstract

This study investigated the teachers' and students' perceptions on language acquisition for young learners using Mobile App in EFL context. Many ways have been found to assist young learners in acquiring English as a Foreign Language. This study applied survey where the teachers' perceptions were obtained from the observation, while the students' perceptions were taken from the observation questionnaire. The respondent and participants were taken from six elementary schools in which there were twelve English teachers and 569 students of grade 4th in Indonesia. The result showed that teachers thought most students were anxious and didn't have self-esteem and a good motivation while learning English. The teachers' perceptions don't always match the students' ones or vice-versa in learning English in EFL context. It is expected that the mismatches of teachers' and students' perception are not greater than the match ones.

**Keywords:** Mobil Apps, English Vocabulary, Young Learners

## 1. Introduction

A teacher should have believed that she or he has been devoting to the students matches to what students' perceptions or vice-versa. In other words, both teachers and students must have the similar point of views at learning the course. The similar point of views leads the mutual understanding to reach the aim of learning. Therefore, many studies in EFL context have investigated the teachers' perception (Alghasab, 2020; Bsharat et al., 2021; Ćirković-Miladinović and Dimitrijević, 2020; Luan et., 2020; Millán Librado & Santos, 2020;; Reynolds et al., 2021) and students' perceptions (Abdelrady et al., 2022; Abdullah, 2020; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019; Fithriani et al., 2019; Hussain Al-Qahtani, 2019; Ika Dhamayanti, 2021; Karimian Shirejini & Shirejeni, 2020; Klimova & Polakova, 2020; Millán Librado & Santos, 2020; Roos & Nicholas, 2019; Sheybani, 2019; Soria et al., 2020; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Vattøy & Smith, 2019; Wallace & Leong, 2020; Wang et al., 2019). The respondent and participants used in the previous studies of EFL are also varied such as university or college students (Abdullah, 2020; Alghasab, 2020; Hussain Al-Qahtani, 2019; Karimian Shirejini & Shirejeni, 2020, Klimova & Polakova, 2020; Luan et al., 2020; Reynolds et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2019), the respondent from senior high students (Abdelrady et al., 2022; Ika Dhamayanti, 2021; Hadj Said & Al-Jamal, 2018), and the respondent from elementary school (Bsharat et al., 2021; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019; Ćirković-Miladinović and Dimitrijević, 2020; Gutierrez Arvizu, 2020; Kurt, 2021; Roos & Nicholas, 2019; Song & Lee, 2018; Soria et al., 2020; Tragant & Vallbona, 2018; Wallace & Leong, 2020).

The level of education leads the skills of language which are focused in the research. The focus might cover only one skill of language competent or more than one. The previous studies that examine reading skills (Elyas & Al-Bogami, 2018; Kurt, 2021; Tragant & Vallbona, 2018), writing skills (Alghasab, 2020; Kurt, 2021; Roos & Nicholas, 2019), Hussain Al-Qahtani, 2019; Hadj Said & Al-Jamal, 2018; Sheybani, 2019), listening skills (Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019; Sheybani, 2019; Sooria et al., 2020; Tragant & Vallbona, 2018). Besides four skills of language, there are few other language components reported by the previous studies such as vocabulary (Abdullah, 2020; Boyinbode, 2018; Chen, 2019; Elaish, 2017; Elyas & Al-Bogami, 2018; Hadj Said & Al-Jamal, 2018; Klimova, 2019; Klimova & Polakova, 2020; Kohnke, 2020; Makoe, 2018; Nicolaidou, 2021; Song, & Ma, 2019; Sooria et al., 2020), pronunciation (Hadj Said & Al-Jamal, 2018).

The studies which have examined the students' perception to EFL learning like positive respond (Abdelrady et al., 2022; Abdullah, 2020; Alghasab, 2020; Bsharat et al., 2021; Ćirković-Miladinović and Dimitrijević, 2020; Fithriani et at., 2019; Hussain Al-Qahtani, 2019; Ika Dhamayanti, 2021; Sheybani, 2019; Tragant & Vallbona, 2018; Wang et al., 2019), while other studies report the negative respond from students (Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019; Klimova & Polakova, 2020). In addition, the usage of ICT undergone by teacher in the classroom is less effective (Habibi et al., 2019). Ineffectiveness of using ICT is caused by many levels of knowledge (Akayoglu et al., 2020), gender

and age (Indradhikara et al., 2020). Finally, the negative respond from the teachers (Ćirković-Miladinović and Dimitrijević, 2020; Millán Librado & Santos, 2020). The other respond is that lack of training is the other cause of effectiveness in using ICT application (Ahmed et al.,2020; Aisha Champa, 2019).

When the different perception between students and teachers, it can be inferred that there is a gap like stated in the previous research. The gap which must be investigated is to bridge the needs both students and teachers in EFL context. One of the gaps that should be examined is the perception of learning vocabulary for EYL. No matter the language skills students learn, vocabulary is one of the crucial skills which must be owned by the learners. Consequently, EYL vocabulary in EFL context has been invited many researchers. According to Budianto et al (2017), one of the abilities that must be learned and mastered by English language learners is vocabulary mastery.

For teaching language in multilingual community, the right methods and techniques are truly needed. In this case, children not only use one language but two or several other languages that they already knew. This makes it quite difficult for children to focus on one language only. Often, children use their first and second languages in the learning process which makes it difficult for teachers to apply just one language. This can be avoided by children. On the contrary, teachers are always required to solve children's problems in language learning. Therefore, we need MLE (Multilingual Bilingual Education), which is an education system based on the condition of the community of foreign language users and adapts to the needs and characteristics of learners (Taylor, 2010).

Having a good vocabulary comprehension supports children's speaking and writing skills. The previous studies about English vocabulary have been administered in the level of university (Boyinbode, 2018; Chen, 2019; Fithriani, 2021; Klimova, 2018; Klimova, 2020; Kohnke, 2020; Nicolaidou, 2021; Sooryah, 2020). Sadly, only a few studies concerns investigating English vocabulary of the elementary level (Gutierrez Arvizu et al., 2020; Song & Lee, 2018; Soria et al., 2020).

Cahyono and Widiati (2008) convey the need for strategies in teaching and learning English vocabulary by adjusting the acquisition of learner's vocabulary. Many ways have been found to help children enrich their vocabulary, narrative instruction method (Gutierrez Arvizu et al., 2020), code switching and English instruction (Song & Lee, 2018), and MIM or Mobile Instant Messaging (Soria et al., 2020).

Obviously, the methods aim to help children use these words in real life. For example, if a child wants to describe his bedroom, he must definitely mention everything in that room. This will be difficult if he only knows a few items while there are still many other items he can name. It happens because he does not know how to say those items in English or he forgets how to say the items in English. This phenomenon often occurs in learning English. The effective teaching methods created by the English teacher really have to motivate children to have as much vocabulary as they need since motivation affects the mastery of vocabulary (Boyinbode, 2018; Elaish, 2017; Kacelt & Klimova, 2019; Kohnke, 2020).

The next query that emerges is why do children belong to a low level of vocabulary mastery? Previous studies have shown several reasons for identifying the phenomenon. First, children learn vocabulary that they do not use, see, do, and maybe they do not need. When learning vocabulary related to astronomy, children must find many words they have never heard before. That makes it difficult for the children to understand. Besides, the children cannot remember those words because they seldom use them. Second, children learn unrelated vocabulary to their real life. Third, English has a different way of pronouncing words. What is written and spoken is mostly different. For example, the word "book" in English is pronounced as / book /, but in Indonesian it is pronounced as / bo-ok /.

English teachers have been clearly working hard to help students have sufficient vocabulary that they need to know. Having few efforts, teachers are believed that they have got perspectives. Previous studies (Alghasab, 2020; Bsharat, 2021; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019; Hussain Al-Qahtani, 2019) report that teachers convince that having a good understanding of vocabulary, children are expected to be competent in listening, speaking, writing, and reading English. The success in learning a foreign language is determined by aspects of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.

Recent studies have examined the effectiveness of acquiring vocabulary using ICT in various Mobile App. Moreover, EYL (English for Young Learners) is considered as Generation Z where they prefer using mobile phones and tablets. They have grown up in a hyper-connected world and the smartphone is their preferred method of communication. In addition, technology helps much in mastering English vocabulary in digital period like today. One of technology which is the most popular one is mobile learning. Recent studies have applied the mobile learning (Klimova, 2019; Klimova, 2020;), the gaming and gamification (Boyinbode, 2018; Fithriani, 2021), smartphone application (Kacelt and Klimova, 2019).

Previous research shows that teaching English vocabulary should be interesting and enjoyable in a hope that the learner will get vocabulary enrichment. By having vocabulary addition, students will be able to communicate both in verbal and written means of communication. Moreover, tender age is an ideal time for them to master a foreign language compared to those who are over the age of 17 years (adults). Vocabulary is learned by leaners in almost language skills such listening, speaking, writing, and reading. The studies report that ICT could improve writing quality and student's revision (Ahmad, 2020; Lee, 2020). In addition, ICT also contributes significantly to accuracy and complexity (Azodi & Lotfi, 2020). Similar finding in speaking skills found that ICT enabled learners speaking foreign and second language better (Chen & Hwang, 2019; Taufik et al., 2020; Yaşar, 2020).

Regarding to reading, ICT has played fruitful assistance to improve learners' reading ability (Chen, 2020; Pasaribu, 2020; Sonawane, 2020). Although there is no doubt of the importance of running ICT, Champa et al (2019) argues that ICT is not effective because of teachers' barriers such as training, competence, equipment, appropriate software and material. In line with Champa et al (2019), the usage

of ICT undergone by teacher in the classroom is less effective (Habibi et al., 2019). Ineffectiveness of using ICT is caused by many level of knowledge (Akayoğlu et al., 2020), gender and ages (Indradhikara et al., 2020). Lack of training is the other cause of effectiveness. This research focuses on acquiring English vocabulary for young Learners in EFL Context.The aim of this study was whether the teachers' perceptions on acquiring English vocabulary match with students' perceptions using ICT as young learners in EFL Context.

## 2. Method

This research used a survey study by using interview and questionnaire to find out teachers and students perception on learning English vocabulary in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Sidoarjo is a second big city in east Java near Surabaya. Interview and questionnaire were applied to examine teachers' and students' perception on learning English vocabulary. The interview with open-ended was given to the teachers while questionnaire was addressed to the students in Indonesian language. The questions in the questionnaire designed by the researchers had been validated by a ELT professor teaching at Malang State University in Indonesia.

The questions in interview were regarding to students' motivation, medium of learning, methods and strategies, and the use of mobile phone and digital learning (ICT). On the other hands, the questionnaires in twenty questions asked the frequency of using English, the easiest and the most difficult skills, the way of teaching done by the teacher, psychological factors and the use of cellphone (mobile phone). The questionnaire was in Indonesian language to make students understand easily. This study involved 6 elementary schools where the participants were the students and English teachers of grade 4th. There were 569 students and 12 teachers taking a part in this study.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### The Interview with Teachers

There were a lot of various answers obtained from the interview with the teacher that were relating to students' motivation, medium of learning, methods and strategies, and the use of mobile and digital learning. The answers can be categorized into three; 1) attitudes, 2) aptitudes, 3) and facilities. The attitudes relate to students' willingness, students were anxious to speak English, feeling afraid because of being mocked by their friends, less appreciation for students, low motivation. In addition, aptitudes are dealing with mastery of vocabulary, and students' speaking English. In last, facilities concern in limited source of learning (95 minutes a week), internet access, uncolorful content of book, limited time to study at school, students' preferences in games, songs, and other fun activities.

### Questionnaire for the Students

Table 1 answers to a survey for young learners which asked them; if they used the Indonesian language at home, if they used local language (Javanese) at home, and if they used English at home. From the first question, it can be seen that most students communicate with their family members using Indonesian language since more than eighty per cent said that they used Indonesian language while only a few of them didn't use it. In addition, the question number 2 indicated that more than sixty per cent stated they spoke using Javanese language while only s few students claimed they didn't use it. Not surprisly, a few students spoke English at home in which seventy per cent answered that they didn't speak in English at home as seen from the question number 3.

In conclusion, it is evident that Indonesian language as national language was the most language spoken while English was not frequently used. It indicates that English as a foreign language in Indonesia was true. It also indicated that English as a foreign language in Indonesia affects to students' and teachers' perceptions. It's not weird that only a few young learners in Indonesia were good at speaking English.A good new was that Javanese as a local language was still often spoken by the students. Using local language shows the local wisdom remains in the use of the local language. It also proofs that students belong to the multilingual communinity.

Table 1. Survey items on students' perception of mastering language

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you use Indonesian language at home? | Yes | 83% |
| | No | 17% |
| Do you use local language (Javanese language) at home? | Yes | 63% |
| | No | 37% |
| Do you sometimes use English at home? | Yes | 25% |
| | No | 75% |

Table 2 answers to a survey for young learners which asked them; if they think that speaking English is easy, if they think that reading English passage is easy, if they think that writing English is easy, and if they think that listening dialogue in English is easy. From the question number 1, it can be seen that most students argued that speaking English is not difficult as fifty seven per cent said that speaking English is easy for them while a few of them (forty three per cent) believed that speaking English was difficult. In addition, the question number 2 indicated that fifty nine per cent stated reading English passage was not hard while forty one per cent claimed reading English passage was not easy. Through the question number 3, it can be seen that more than a half students argued that writing English is not difficult as fifty one per cent said that writing English is easy for them while a few of them (forty nine per cent) stated that writing English was hard. In addition, the question number 4 showed that fifty per cent stated listening English dialogue was not hard while fifty per cent answered it was not easy.

In short, a half of students thought that English was easy relating to four skills; speaking, reading, writing, and listening. However, it can't be

said that it is always true. There were more than forty one per cent students saying speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills were still hard.

Table 2. Survey items on students' perception of their language skills

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you think that speaking English is easy? | Yes | 57% |
| | No | 43% |
| Do you think that reading English passage is easy? | Yes | 59% |
| | No | 41% |
| Do you think that writing English is easy? | Yes | 51% |
| | No | 49% |
| Do you think that listening dialogue in English is easy? | Yes | 50% |
| | No | 50% |

Table 3 answers to a survey for young learners which asked them; if they thought that listening English dialogue is difficult for them, if they thought that speaking English is difficult for them, if they thought that writing in English is difficult for them, and if they thought that reading English passage is difficult for them,. From the question number 1, fifty per cent said that listening was hard while fifty per cent said the same answer. it can be seen that sometimes listening is difficult but in other time it was wasy for the students. Besides, the question number 2 indicated that fifty five per cent stated speaking English is difficult. On the other hand, only forty five per cent said speaking English was not difficult. The question number 3 reported that fifty five per cent stated writing English is difficult. Additionally, only forty five per cent said writing English was not difficult. In last question, fifty one percent stated that reading English passage is difficult while forty nine per cent gave contradictory.

In sum, a half of students thought that English was difficult relating to four skills; speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Speaking and writing were more difficult than listening and reading in English.

Table 3. Survey items on students' perception of the difficulty of language skills

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you think that listening English dialogue is difficult for you? | Yes | 50% |
| | No | 50% |
| Do you think that speaking English is difficult for you? | Yes | 55% |
| | No | 45% |
| Do you think that writing in English is difficult for you? | Yes | 55% |
| | No | 45% |
| Do you think that reading English passage is difficult for you? | Yes | 51% |
| | No | 49% |

Table 4 answers to a survey for young learners which asked them; if their teacher speaks English mostly when teaching English, if their teacher uses English songs when teaching English, and if their teacher uses games when teaching English, From the question number 1, it can be inferred that ninety one per cent gave a positive perception dealing with teachers performance in using English as the mean of communication in the class. It can be inferred that most English teachers used English than Indonesian language. From the question number 2, Students' perceptions were also positive on games applied by the teachers since fifty six per cent stated that songs were used in the English class. From the question number 3, Students' perceptions were positive on games applied by the teachers since sixty three per cent stated that games were used in the English class. It means that using games in teaching English was prominent for the young learners

Briefly, games are more preferred than songs by the students in learning English in the EFL Context.

Table 4. Survey items on students' perception of methods used by the teachers

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you think that your teacher speaks English mostly when teaching English? | Yes | 91% |
| | No | 9% |
| Do you think that your teacher uses English songs when teaching English? | Yes | 56% |
| | No | 44% |
| Do you think that your teacher uses games when teaching English? | Yes | 63% |
| | No | 37% |

Table 5 answers to a survey for young learners which asked them; if they feel excited when learning English, if they feel anxious when learning English, and if they feel engaged to be good at English. From the question number 1, it can be stated that eighty per cent felt excited when learning English, while only a few (twenty per cent) were not happy when learnin English. It can be said that they did enjoyed learning English. From the question number 2, seventy per cent didn't feel anxious when learning English. This finding was in line with the previous finding saying that students were excited during learning. From the question number 3, sixty three per cent felt engaged to be good at English. It can be inferred that most students had a great motivation to learn English.

In sum, almost all students were motivated to master English. It was a good starting point for students and teachers as young learners were faster to learn adult learners. Therefore, the awareness from stakes holders to always pays attention was very necessary in elevating the quality of English in elementary schools.

Table 5. Survey items on students' perception of attitude towards English

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you feel excited when learning English? | Yes | 80% |
| | No | 20% |
| Do you feel anxious when learning English? | Yes | 30% |
| | No | 70% |
| Do you feel engaged to be good at English? | Yes | 93% |
| | No | 7% |

Table 6 answers to a survey for young learners which asked them; if they think that cellphone is important for them, if they think that cellphone is a good medium to study English at home, and if they think that cellphone is a good medium to study English at school. From the question number 1, it can be inferred that eighty three per cent believed cellphone is important for them. From question number 2, sixty one per cent stated cellphone is a good medium to study English at home. From question number 3, ninety five per cent stated that cellphone is not a good medium to study English at school. Moreover, the question number 4 showed eighty one per cent claimed cellphone is a good tools to play games

In conclusion, these findings would be very beneficial if the games also utilized the cellphone belonged by the students. Cellphone is the mobile gadget that is used by most students. Unfortunately, they used it not for supporting English learning but for playing games.

Table 6. Survey items on students' perception of using cellphone

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you think that cellphone is important for you? | Yes | 83% |
| | No | 17% |
| Do you think that cellphone is a good medium to study English at home? | Yes | 61% |
| | No | 39% |
| Do you think that cellphone is a good medium to study English at school? | Yes | 5% |
| | No | 95% |
| Do you think that cellphone is a good tools to play games? | Yes | 81% |
| | No | 19% |

**The Match and Mismatch of Teachers' and Students' Perceptions**

Teachers argued that many students didn't have the sufficient willingness, but most students claim that they were encouraged to learn English. It can be Hadj Said that there was contradictory perception. The students' perceptions were supported the previous saying that the students were very motivated in learning (Wallace, & Leong. 2020). It seemed the teachers' perception didn't match with students' ones.

Another different perception happened when teachers Hadj Said most students were anxious to learn English. Again, this perception was totally contradictory from teachers' perceptions because students reported that they were not afraid while studying English since 70% of students informed that they were not anxious. The teachers' perceptions were supported the previous studies claiming that students were anxious to speak (Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019). According to the teachers students were afraid because of being mocked by their friends when speaking English. It seemed the teachers' perception didn't match with students' ones.

In addition, some teachers confessed there was less appreciation and rewards for students who got a good achievement such as having a good score, being able to answer question. This might be one of the causes why most students had low motivation based on the teachers' point of view. This is in line with the statements stated by Boyinbode (2018), Elaish et al (2017), Kacelt and Klimova (2019), and Kohnke (2020) saying that motivation affects the mastery of students' vocabulary. The problem is students felt existed in learning English since there were 84% of students saying happy to learn. It indicated that most students had a great motivation to study. It seemed the teachers' perception didn't match with students' ones.

On the other hand, according to Cabrera-Solano et al., (2019), students' listening ability increases gradually by having a good motivation. Teachers belived that vocabulary was one of the difficulties in learning English. Having a little vocabulary causes misunderstanding and difficulty in learning listening. It was proved by the data which shown percentage of students who had difficulty in listening was 50%. It

seemed the teachers' perception matched with students' ones.

The teachers stated that many students were not good at speaking. It occurred because there was no positive support from their classmates. This idea was in line socio- cultural and contextual factors had a negative impact to the learners (Alghasab, 2020). Perhaps, the students were good at speaking only to the teachers NOT to their friends. The data shows that 55% of students declared they were able to speak. It is in line with the statement produced by Hadj Said (2018) saying teachers' attitude in speaking English influenced students' perception. That why most students had a positive opinion because most teachers or 91% spoke English while teaching. It seemed the teachers' perception didn't match with students' ones.

In last, students' preferences of using games, songs, and other fun activities to study English reported that using English songs was 56% of students and using games was 63% of students. It can be inferred that many teachers applied songs and games in teaching English. Song contributed significantly, especially to vocabulary mastery for children (Ara, 2009; Fransischa and Syafei, 2016; Sevik, 2017; Romero, 2017). Song used as learning media can provide joy in learning English for children (Fransischa and Syafei, 2016; Hadian, 2015; Shen, 2009). In regard to language acquisition, songs help children to obtain and remember new English vocabulary easily (Ara, 2009; Fransischa and Syafei, 2016; Kuśnierek, and Derenowski Kalisz, 2016). Similarly, Games bring the positive influence using the gaming and gamification (Boyinbode, 2018; Chen, 2018; Fithriani, 2021; Kohnke, 2020). In addition, Zhonggen (2018) saying that gaming is better than traditional approach. Moreover, Wallace & Leong (2020) argued that songs and games are students favorite as an intrinsic motivation to learn English. It seemed the teachers' perception matched with students' ones.

The mismatch between teachers' and students' perceptions could be overcome by applying the mobile app as one of the tools of ICT. It is expected that teachers and students' perceptions match each other. Here, the successful of applying ICT in EFL also depends on how teachers and students demonstrate their attitude and perception. Most previous studies report that both students and teachers have the positive attitude of the ICT usage for improving efficacy such as writing (Lee, 2020; Sampson & Yoshida, 2020), Speaking (Chen & Hwang, 2019; Yaşar 2020), reading (Pasaribu, 2020), vocabulary(Kohnke, 2020; Siahaan, 2020), phonology (Nurhayati, 2019), lexico-grammatical (Lee, 2020). Teachers' attitude, for example, the finding from previous studies also claim that most teachers believe a prominent contribution of ICT (Ahmed et al., 2020; Blume, 2020; Habibi et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2020; Pan & Gan, 2020). Similarly, students have a positive attitude of ICT in the classroom (Grigoryan, 2020; Namziandost et al.,2020).

## 4. Conclusion

The teachers' perceptions don't always match the students' ones or vice-versa in learning English in EFL context. It is expected that the mismatches of teachers and students' perception are not greater than the match ones. Through the perceptions, there would be sufficient in administering the learning and teaching English vocabulary to elementary students by using Mobile Learning like cellphone. Since it is not only fun but also able to improve the mastery of vocabulary in the ability to listen and to pronounce correctly. And cellphone or smartphone is the ideal technology for young learners because it is provided with the voice for pronunciation for each word. For the 4$^{th}$ grade students of elementary school, vocabulary should not be focused on the printed sources but it can utilize the digital sources like smartphone. It is no wonder that the elementary school students' vocabulary is one of the priorties in acquiring English as vocabulary is always be used in almost language skills such as listening, speaking, writing and speaking. Having a good mastery of vocabulary helps young learners to improve their language competence. However, teaching vocabulary for young learners in EFL context and multilingual society needs an interactive medium which can be utilized digital gadget like cellphone.

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