

COMPETENCE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES OF OLDER STUDENTS IN BASIC ENGLISH

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Abstract : *This research was conducted to describe the capability and learning outcomes of the older students of Primary Education Department in learning English as a basic course. The researcher wanted to see and explain the real image of their learning in their current ages. The participants of the study involved three older students of first year in Primary Education Department. Regarding the technique of collecting data, the researcher used three instruments i.e observation sheet, interview guide and test. The data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively by using words and statistic descriptive. Results indicated that the competences of the two of three older students in English class were not effective any longer. Their learning outcomes also showed their weakness of absorbing input presented in learning process. On the other hand, another older student showed an improvement after giving strong effort.*

Keywords: *Competence, Learning outcomes, Older students, English learning*

Abstrak : Penelitian ini dilaksanakan untuk menerangkan kemampuan dan hasil belajar mahasiswa Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (PGMI) yang berusia tua sehubungan dengan mata kuliah Bahasa Inggris sebagai mata kuliah dasar. Peneliti ingin mengetahui dan mendapatkan gambaran nyata tentang pembelajaran mereka di usia mereka saat ini. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini meliputi tiga orang mahasiswa (usia tua) semester satu jurusan Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan tiga instrumen yaitu: observasi, pedoman wawancara dan tes. Data dianalisa secara kualitatif dan kuantitatif yaitu masing-masing dengan uraian dan statistik deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi dua dari tiga orang mahasiswa yang berusia tua dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris tidak efektif lagi. Hasil belajar mereka juga menunjukkan lemahnya kemampuan mereka dalam menyerap input yang dipresentasikan selama belajar. Sementara itu, satu orang lainnya mengalami kemajuan setelah melakukan upaya keras.

Kata Kunci: *Kompetensi, Hasil Belajar, Mahasiswa usia tua, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris*

1. Introduction

Age is viewed as one of essential factors in learning language. Some said that learning language at the earlier age is better than later. As one of popular Second Language Acquisition experts, Lennerberg (1967), states clearly by term of critical period; the period before puberty in which learner acquires language more quickly. Moreover, the international research has proved that learning foreign language in the earlier stage of age contributes the better result than starting in later age (Penfield, 1967; Taylor and Taylor, 1990; and Snow, 1993).

However, a research recently conducted clarified that there is no difference effect between learning foreign language in younger and older age if students face non native

speaker teacher and limited time provided in studying (Gawi: 2012). The situation where the younger or older learner involve in language instruction indeed takes responsibility for success or fail of the language learning itself. In fact, if older language learners support themselves strongly to overcome the target language challenges, they can succeed. Also, a language tutor has to create the appropriate class instruction to enhance learners' capability (Nagai: 1997). Furthermore, the noted declaration of nativism, Noam Chomsky; the nativist clarifies that every person has granted with the innate capability of acquiring a language (Ellis: 264). Thus, it shows a contrast; no matter what and when a language learner learned a language are seen equal in ability. In this study, the researcher taught English as basic course and faced three older students in her English teaching class. The older students attended the class and learned English as the supporting course of their major (Teacher for Primary Education). They apparently participated the whole set of class procedures as well as the younger (other normal age students). Due to the students' future profession (in this case: a would be primary teacher) they should be versatile in certain subjects, including English. They are required to learn English to support them applying it in everyday class for their primary students. This situation led the researcher describe their ability and learning achievements during English class learning.

2. Literature Review

Based on Oxford dictionary the word competence means *ability to do something well*. While outcome is defined as *effect or result*. So, learning outcome means effect or result of learning. Competence and learning outcome of adult can be differed. Lennerberg said if language is acquired after critical period, there might be a difficulty for an adult to conquer the target language (Lenneberg 1967). While on the other hand, adult obtained advantage in language learning because of a certain factor.

In adult development there are two kinds of intelligences called fluid intelligence and cristalized intelligence. Fluid intelligence is a capacity of an adult to think and give logical reasoning. On contrary, cristalized intelligence highlights the culture and experience attained by adult in their life. (Monks, Knoers & Haditono: 340: 2006).

Regarding the cristalized intelligence mentioned above, adult may have benefit in enhancing their language aquisition. Adults had experience in using their native language, so they can take it as the initial skill to acquire the target language. In fact, adults had their first language grammar in mind, therefore, older learners can go well with language form as well as monitoring in second language (Ellis:1986). Furthermore (Karavasili: 2014) also states: Adults (meaning people after puberty) have an important advantage: **cognitive maturity** and their **experience** of the general language system. Through their knowledge of their mother tongues, as well as other foreign languages, not only can they achieve more advantageous learning conditions than children, but they can also more easily acquire grammatical rules and syntactic phenomena.

The statemet indicates that language learning in older age benefits the language learners themselves. Also, another opinion mentions that adults learn differently from children, but no age-related differences in learning ability have been demonstrated for adults of different ages. Moreover, the cognitive maturity of adults can lead them to comprehend the language instruction properly. Adults have fully mindset development, so they will come to proficience. The more proper language instruction given enables the better result in language learning as the olders language learners have bigger cognitive maturity (Munoz: 2010)

3. Research Methodology

This research was descriptive study, in which elaborates the thing genuinely without any manipulation. Because of its specific target, so the technique of sampling used is purposive sample.

3.1 Participants

The participants of the research were three students of *PGMI* (Teacher for Primary Education Department) selected from two classes of the same level- that is first year students.

3.2 Instruments

Data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The instruments used are observation sheet, interview guide and test.

3.3 Procedure

The researcher spent nine meetings or half semester to accomplish this research. She implemented the teaching while observing the activity and development of the older students in learning English subject. The information was noted down on observation sheet. For an illustration of a class activity, the researcher present a reading text about university students' activity. The students were instructed to work in group. In the text, the students met new vocabulary of daily activity at college and simple present tense form. During the activity the researcher observed how the older students took part and solve the problem. At the end of meeting, the researcher asked the students to review new vocabulary and deduced the pattern of the sentences already learned.

Regarding the learning outcome, the researcher undertook the test consisted of quiz and midterm tests to figure out the students' achievement. Deep interview was also performed once in class break by addressing questions related to the students competence in learning English. The questions and answers were tape-recorded in order to present authentic data. Here are the core questions addressed to the students:

- What do you think about English subject?
- When did you start learning English?
- In your opinion, how significant is the English subject?
- Do you get any difficulty during learning?
- If you compare between learning English in younger age and at present age, how do you differ and which one do you think most effective?

3.4 Data Analysis

Data obtained from Observation sheet and interview guide were analysed by words. While data taken from the test was measured by the formula below:

$$\frac{\text{Total Score Obtained}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

and then it showed by the mean ($\bar{x}$) score as follow:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

4. Results and Discussion

In observation part, it revealed about the situation of the three older students in class when teaching learning of English occurred. The two of them still contributed great enthusiasm. These two students worked and cooperated well with their younger classmates. They discuss everything related to the subject whenever they found complication. They are

not reluctant to consult the researcher, in this case as their teacher. On the other hand, another older student was rather anxious and discouraged. It can be accepted as other normal younger students who are lack of motivation or less confidence, so it can not be judged as “age factor cause”.

For more detail, during the researcher observed the learning process of the older students, she found that they tended to have slow responses on the sentence forms. They felt much confious when they see the pattern of a sentence and when the sentence got changed in a certain part, for example, in simple present tense; the verb present will come with an *s* or *es* if its subject is third singular person. Besides, they also got difficulty in pronouncing the typical long words.

Furthermore, interview result can be dicussed properly by attaching to the questions stated earlier above. In this case, the researcher used initial for each student (SY), (NM) and (SW). Their ages respectively were 57, 45, 45 years old. Regarding the first question (SY) told that she loved English since she was a child until she was a teenage. She learned English when she was as junior high school student and ended it when she finished her senior high school. So, she experienced six years English class at school. On how significant English is, she stated that English is very important as nowadays life everybody uses English to connect he or she to the world. Then, she also related English to her profession as primary school teacher. She has to handle every subject including English to be taught to her students. For the last question, she compared between learning English since she was a teenage and at a present age. Obviously, she complaint about her capability at present. She described it more intensively. She said that learning English at current time was not as effective as in the earlier time where she acquired the input of the language more easily and quickly. In addition, she could even obtained the highest score in class. But now she tended to forget the vocabulary and get complicated in identifying structure of a sentence. She clarified the reason behind her complicatedness — it was she had alot of thing to think and to manage as she was a mother, a wife and a teacher.

In the same time the researcher asked the similar questions to the student (NM), she clarified that she did not like English since she was in a school age. She learned English at junior high school. She thought English was difficult due to its complex grammar. Forthmore, she could hardly pronounced English words in proper way. For its significance, English was thought importance by her, but she gave up to study it more precisely. So, it can not be figure out for further as the student was not excited to learn at first.

Another student, (SW) asserted that she was very interested in learning English. She had studied English for six years since her level was at junior and senior high school. English was not strange for her as her father was an English teacher. She got some exposure from her father. Until, she got married and quit to study. On the significance of English, she firmly believed if she had competence in English, she could gain benefits. The principal of the school she works for would trust her to teach English. So, she would be credible and qualified in her carier. She then described her diffulty in English at her current age. The researcher asked her to compare her capabilty earlier and then. She elaborated that nothing missed in her memory when she was young. She obtained input either vocabulary or forms effortlessly. Everything went smoothly because she could grasp the input more easily. On the contrary, what she obtained in her age now could not be saved longer. Everytime she tried to remember or analysed something, it always complicated herself. She realised her brain got slower to think and could not be reliable as it was. Moreover, (SW) told that she had a lot of routine activities to be done.

For learning outcomes they achieved during learning process can be described by the table of the test below.

Table 4.1 Learning Outcomes

No	Name (initial)	Quiz Score	Midterm Score	Total	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
1	SY	45	50	95	47.5
2	NM	40	40	80	40
3	SW	50	75	125	62.5

Through the test, the researcher obtained the data about learning outcomes of the students as showed in the table above. Each student differed in the score obtained. SY increased her score from 45 in quiz to 50 in midterm test. Meanwhile, NM had no change, she still remained obtained 40 constanly. However, SW got 50 in quiz and raised her mark to 75 in midterm test. In fact, through the mean score it can be concluded that SW became the one who reached the highest score among two other rivals.

5. Conclusion

The descriptions of three older students' competence in learning English as basic course at Teacher Primary Department of Al-Hilal College Sigli were varied. Two of them decreased in their capability. They had many difficulties either in vocabulary mastery or structure because of the decrescent of memorisation. Another older student reached a significant improvement, although she admitted her current age really influened her competence. Regarding the learning outcomes, the two older studens obtained less adequate scores. They even obtained very lower scores, in which categorised as *poor* if the scores fit to the academic assessment criteria. While another student could achieved the *fair* position.

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