Male Students Perception Toward English For Young Learner Course At English Language Education Department

Zulfa Imawanti, Santi Prastiyowati, Puji Sumarsono, Rafika Rabba Farah

Abstract—Teaching profession has been dominated by women mainly in low-level grade. The most significant gap between female and male teacher is identified in kindergarten and elementary level. In line with this issue, there is a course in university-level which is also dominated by female students, namely English for Young Learner (EYL) course at English Language and Education Department (ELED) in University of Muhammadiyah Malang. It is, therefore, this study aims to investigate male students’ perception toward EYL course. Survey research design was applied in this research and the data was collected using questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The participants who filled the questionnaire were fifty-three male students of ELED UMM in academic year 2015 who have taken elective course—Business English, Translation, and English for Young Learner. The findings of this study highlighted that 9 out of 15 items resulted in negative responses toward EYL course. They perceived that EYL course is complicated, demanding and exhausting course because of its difficulty. Then, teaching young children has never been considered as their future career and they also do not want to become a teacher for young children. Additionally, there are also few male students perceived positively toward EYL course, they stated that EYL course is fun and challenging course. Furthermore, the authors suggested the department to attract more male students to become a teacher for the young learner.

Index Terms—Course, English for Young Learner, male students, perception.

1 INTRODUCTION

TEACHING English to children has been growing very rapidly all over the world, as well as in Indonesia. It is essential to teach English for children since a young age that will be useful and valuable for their future career. However, teaching English to a young learner is a bit challenging instead of teaching adult students. It is widely reported that the teaching profession has been largely dominated by women. According to Ministry of Education and Culture data and statistics center 2015/2016, the biggest gap between female and male teacher is found in kindergarten, the ratio is 95.5 and the ratio for elementary level is 65:34 [1]. According to the National Education Association for Elementary Teachers, only 13 percent of elementary school teachers are men, and these men mostly teach in grades 5 and 6 [2]. The reasons why male avoid teaching profession because of low wages, lack of prestige, social prejudice against men, the feminization of the field, and social stigma [3]. In this issue that there is a course which is also dominated by female students, namely English for Young Learner (EYL) course at English Language and Education Department in University of Muhammadiyah Malang. Throughout the years, EYL course is always dominated by female students instead of the male ones. Regarding the data in the last three years, a majority of male students who join EYL course had a noticeable decrease. It is based on the data gained from English Language Education Department from 2015 until 2018. The number of students who join EYL course in 2015 was sixteen male students and it decreased into nine students in 2016, then there was an only male student in 2017 as well as in 2018. As a result, it is recorded in 2018, the male student did not continue the course into EYL II. Previous research has noted that the reasons of male students do not take EYL course as their elective course because of friends’ suggestion, they do not like teaching and dealing with children, they think that they have no passion teaching the young learner. They also assume that EYL is the busiest course and only suitable for a woman [4]. Since many males avoid teaching profession and considering those male students who join EYL course significantly decreased in the period, the research aims to find out more about the perception of male students toward EYL course. As known these perceptions can influence someone in doing something, even in making a decision in choosing the elective course.

Gender Gap in the Teaching Profession

Teaching profession has long been dominated by women. Society belief that teaching profession as a “women’s work” especially in low-level grades such as kindergarten and elementary school. This global event has strong roots in issues relating to economic development, the position of women in society, urbanization, the cultural definition of masculinity and the value of children and childcare [5]. It can be seen from the statistical data that there is a gender imbalance in the teaching of young children. According to Ministry of Education and Culture data and statistics center 2015/2016, the most significant gap between female and male teacher is found in kindergarten, the ratio is 95:5 and the ratio for elementary level is 65:34 [1]. Besides, Garcia [6] asserts that students in grades 1-3 have less of a chance of having male teacher than students in grades 4-6. In other words, the lower the level of grade, the lower the number of male teachers. However, the gap between male and female teachers in low-level grades is more significant than the higher level grades.
Perceptions and Reasons for Male avoiding Teaching Children

Most of the men avoid teaching children is because of some reasons. A study conducted by Drudy et al. [5] about school leavers and student teachers’ perceptions and reasons why the number of men going into teaching children fell continuously. Women’s job/ female domination, woman better with children, low payment, the attraction of other jobs, primary teaching unattractive, men dislike working with children, fear of abuse allegations, and young children difficulty is the reasons why lack of male primary teachers. Another reason is because of the lack of support from society. Men must cope various social perceptions such as coping with the disagreement of family, associates, and society for selecting a job which has been the domain of female for a long time [7], [8]. Cushman discovered that parents, especially fathers, counted teaching to be an inappropriate profession for their children [9]. Additionally, it is encountered male teachers have low esteem to admit their profession working with children and avoid talking about profession with other people by reason of fear of undesirable responses [10]. It shows that the society perceived that teaching is inappropriate and worthless profession for men. The research literature on the lack of male teachers also cites several common reasons for the gender disparity in the young children teacher workforce. It is identified that there are three common reasons why males do not choose teaching young children as a career. First, low salary becomes one of the reasons why male decide to avoid teaching as a career. Low salary may have a differential effect on men because of the perception that they need to be a family’s primary wage earner. Second, lack of prestige or low status of teaching profession may affect male teachers more negatively than female teachers. Third, fear of physical contact with children is also argued to be part of men avoid teaching young children [11]. Research has identified that negative stigma and stereotype exist when referring to men who choose to work in a socially considered female profession. Men who express a desire to work with children are stereotyped as a child abuser or pedophile [12]. Meanwhile, women are stereotyped more patient, motherly or caring, or simply ‘better with young children’ [5]. Furthermore, Skelton [13] also investigated the attitudes of male student teachers toward a career in primary school and how gender influences perceptions of primary teaching. The first findings indicated that the student teachers perceived that primary teaching is an intellectually demanding and stressful occupation. Second, they stated that the better qualified to teach young children is female than male because female better work with children and male are more suitable teach at secondary level. Third, they are worried if they go into the primary school, the society will perceive them as being low-level child abuser. Such perceptions can cause males to feel stress and has potential to significantly impact on their personal and career choices [14]. Moreover, male teachers often receive criticism for their career choice when in social situations [15].

The Importance of the Presence of Male Teacher for Young Children

Some male primary teachers are discouraged by the negative stigma of males working with young children. At this point, many authors or even the government point out to increase the number of more male teachers in the primary sector to provide role models for children. While many male teachers have stated that being a positive role model and want to make a difference in children’s life is one of their motivations for becoming a teacher [16]. Another common concern for increasing more male teachers is that the male teacher is perceived as the discipliner role for children. Male teachers are assertive but fair disciplinarians, good at and interested in sports, and have a good sense of humor [16]. Additionally, the importance of recruiting more men into primary appears at a strong level of agreement with the statements that male teachers are necessary for fostering positive attitudes to study among boys and they are needed as role models [13]. Rice and Goessling believe that schools need more male teachers to provide a balanced educational experience for their students [17].

2 METHOD

In the present study, the authors attempted to study the characteristics of respondents through the use of survey research design. Survey research aims to describe and summarize the characteristics of people to measure attitudes, opinions, perceptions, and preferences of some issues [18], [19]. Additionally, Salkind affirms that survey research is to examine the frequency and relationship between psychological and sociological variables such as beliefs, prejudices, attitudes, preferences, and opinions [20]. In all, this study used survey research design as the method and collected the data using a close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The authors determined some criteria for the sample of this research, which are: 1) male students of ELED UMM; 2) students of the academic year 2018; 3) already took an elective course – EYL, Business English and Translation. The total number of male students in the academic year 2018 were 63 people from class A, B, C, D and E that already took the elective course. The number of respondents who filled out the questionnaire were 53 male students. Then the interview was conducted with five male students as representatives from elective course; two people from Business English; two people from Translation, and one person from EYL course. The authors provide the blueprint of the questionnaire as it is presented in Table 1.
RESULT

Human perceptions are shaped by three domains: perceiver, target/object, and context/situation. The perceiver part belongs to statement 1 to 7, the target part is statement 8 to 13, and the context/situation part is statement 14 to 15. To simplify in analyzing the data, the authors tabulated the percentage of each domain in the following.

Perceiver domain
Perceiver is a subject who observes or tries to interpret an object that is influenced by some internal factors; personality, attitude, motives, past experiences and expectations of male students. See Table 2 which shows the percentage of item 1 to 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Aspect(s)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Item(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perceiver (Internal factor)</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Target (Opinion about EYL course)</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Context/Situation (External factor)</td>
<td>13, 14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Items</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 RESULT

It can be described that item 1, more than 50% of the respondents (15.1% strongly disagree and 43.4% disagree) stated that EYL course is not their preferences in choosing EYL course. It is affirmed with item 2 and 3. As seen in percentage of item 2, half of the respondents agreed (13.2% strongly agree and 34.0% agree) that they are not interested in EYL course. Then item 3, almost 50% of the respondents do not want to become a young children teacher (13.2% strongly disagree and 34.0% disagree).

Target domain
Target means an object that is perceived by the perceiver. Target domain explains the object itself. As seen in Table 2, the items are based on target/object domain which is about the opinions of EYL course. It is from questionnaire number 8 to 13. See following the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item(s) of Questionnaire</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>EYL course is one of my preferences in choosing elective courses.</td>
<td>5.7% 28.9% 51.1% 43.4% 13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I am not interested in EYL course.</td>
<td>13.2% 34.0% 17.0% 26.4% 9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I want to become young children teacher.</td>
<td>5.7% 26.5% 22.6% 34.0% 13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I have experience teaching young children.</td>
<td>18.9% 32.1% 9.4% 26.8% 13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>EYL course is not suitable for my future career.</td>
<td>1.9% 32.1% 26.4% 28.3% 11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teaching young children never considered as my career job.</td>
<td>13.2% 37.7% 11.3% 28.3% 9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I am not interested in teaching young children profession because teacher salary is low.</td>
<td>5.7% 13.2% 11.3% 45.3% 24.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is shown that half of the respondents said agree to item 5 (1.9% strongly agree and 32.1% agree). Then, the respondents never considered teaching young children as their future career. It is seen in the percentage of item 6 that more than 50% of the respondents agreed (13.2% strongly agree and 37.7% agree). However, they disagreed if it is caused by the low salary of young children teacher profession. It indicates in item 7 of the questionnaire, almost 70% disagreed of the statement (24.5% strongly disagree and 45.3% disagree). It is also stated by the interviewee:

"...because I don't really like facing children." (A.P)
"For me, a low salary for the teacher is not the important point. Because we have to find the solution to find the money from the other way, not only from being a teacher. .. my lecturer ever told us that if you want to be a teacher, don't think about salary, because you will not be rich. But you can be rich it's because of Rezki from Allah." (W.W)

Although the respondents are not interested in EYL course and do not want to become young children teacher, they have experienced teaching young children. It can be seen from the percentage of item 4 that almost 50% agreed (18.9% strongly agree and 32.1% agree) that they have experienced teaching young children. However, they stated that EYL course is not suitable for their future career. It is shown that half of the respondents said agree to item 5 (1.9% strongly agree and 32.1% agree). Then, the respondents never considered teaching young children as their future career. It is seen in the percentage of item 6 that more than 50% of the respondents agreed (13.2% strongly agree and 37.7% agree). However, they disagreed if it is caused by the low salary of young children teacher profession. It indicates in item 7 of the questionnaire, almost 70% disagreed of the statement (24.5% strongly disagree and 45.3% disagree). It is also stated by the interviewee:

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agree). It is strengthened by the interview:

“I disagree with that statement because men also required ... maybe women are better than men because women like mum who always takes care so much of children. So you do not think that men cannot do that. Sometimes men can do that too even more than women.” (W.A)

“I think it should increase more male to teach EYL students because male works as hard as female and creative as well ...” (W.W)

“... I think EYL course needs more male teacher/participants because to create another kind of environment when teaching English for young children”. (M.R.F)

**Context domain**
The context/situation domain which is from external factor including by the social setting, environment, and society, such as department, lectures, parents, friends or others that can influence the perception. See the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item(s) of Questionnaire</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I got less support to join EYL course.</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I am afraid people will judge me as pedophile if I teach young children.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: S=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.

The percentage of item 14 shows that the respondents disagreed (9.4% strongly disagree and 45.3% disagree) that they get less support. It indicates that male students got support to join EYL course. Then, most of the respondents stated strongly disagreed for item 15 (52.8% strongly disagree and 34.0% disagree). It means that the stereotype about pedophile which is addressed for men who teach young children is not accepted by most of the male students. Because the intention of being a teacher is actually to teach and educate the children. Then, they disagreed if the stereotype is only addressed for men, it might happen to women too.

“I do not think so. Because the purpose is only teaching, it is not about the other thing. If the teacher purely wanted to teach, there is nothing we can call about children abuse. It is purely about teaching”. (A.P)

“... But if stereotyped like that, I do not think that men always do that, maybe a woman can do so”. (W.A)

Additionally, in the interview section, some male students perceived that EYL course is complicated and difficult. Most of them said that because EYL course needs to deal with young children which is something they do not like. The young children themselves that they perceived is kindergarten learners, but the students who will be taught in EYL course are elementary students. These are the statement of the interviewee:

“For me, it’s a complicated and difficult course. Because you guys have to manage and teach the children in a fun way to make them interested in the lesson. Children also need more time to understand the lesson. That’s way teaching children need to be patient. I appreciate whoever taking EYL course because it is not easy to do that. I myself admit that I am not good at teaching children and basically I do not like dealing with children”. (A.P)

“When the first time I heard about EYL course is teaching children in kindergarten level”. (W.A)

In contrast, few of them expressed positively toward EYL course. They stated that EYL course is a challenging and fun course. This statement is not only obtained from male student who took EYL course, but also from male students who took besides EYL course. As a matter of fact, some male students wanted to take EYL course, due to the majority who join EYL course is female and they want to get another experience become the reasons why they did not take EYL course.

“In my opinion, EYL course is a challenging and fun course. Actually I wanted to take EYL course because I feel it is my field and I like children. ... But I did not take EYL because my senior said that the majority students who join EYL is female. I ever told by one of my lecturer that if you want to join EYL course it’s Ok, but all of the students are female. So, I did not want if one class there is no male” (W.W)

**4 DISCUSSION**
Based on the result of questionnaire and interview above, it can be concluded that the majority of male students of ELED UMM academic year 2015 perceived negatively to EYL course. Male students respond that they are not interested in EYL course and it is not their preferences in choosing the elective course. They said that teaching young children has never been considered as their future career and they also do not want to become a teacher for young children. Then, they perceived that EYL course is demanding and exhausting course because teaching young children is difficult. Then, they said that EYL course is the busiest course rather than Business English and Translation course. The fact says that EYL course is dominated by female students—which is similar to finding in Pakistan, South Africa, UK that male teachers do not teach early learners [21], [22], [23]— but male students do not agree if EYL course is only suitable for woman and they support if EYL course has more male students. It is affirmed by the study of Skelton that recruiting more men into primary sector has a strong level of agreement with the statement that male teachers are needed as role models and they are necessary for fostering positive attitudes to study among boys [13]. Rice and Goessling believe that schools need more male teachers to provide a balanced educational experience for their students [17], for role models, various thought, manner, and style of teaching [6]. However, it has no effect of the teacher’s gender on the students’ achievement [24]. Meanwhile, most of the male students disagreed about male teacher stereotyped as pedophile in teaching young children. This stereotype is prejudice and part of discrimination for male teachers [25]. Then, they disagreed if the stereotype
is only addressed for men, it might happen to women too. The findings are inverse with the study of Drudy et al. about school leavers and male student teachers’ perception and the reason why the number of men going into teaching young children decreases continuously [5]. The study revealed that fear of abuse allegation/men are stereotyped as pedophile is one of the reasons why lack of male primary teachers. However, besides male students who perceived EYL course negatively, there are also male students with positive perception toward EYL course. They stated that EYL course is fun and challenging course—as it is claimed by [26], [27], [28]—because they like children and said that teaching young children only teach the basic skills. As a matter of fact, they actually wanted to take EYL course, due to the majority who join EYL course is female and they wanted to get another experience from other elective course, they finally did not take EYL course.

5 CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, the result of this study highlighted that male students of ELED UMM in the academic year 2015 had negative and positive perception toward EYL course. As a result, 9 out of 15 items is revealed that the majority of male students’ perception is negative. They stated that EYL course is not their preferences in choosing the elective course and it is not interesting course for them. Furthermore, teaching young children has never been considered as their future career and they also do not want to become a teacher for young children. They perceived that EYL course is demanding and exhausting course because teaching young children is difficult. Then, they said that EYL course is the busiest course rather than Business English and Translation course. Meanwhile, besides male students who perceived EYL course negatively, there are also few male students with positive perception toward EYL course. They stated that EYL course is fun and challenging as they like children and said teaching young children only teach the basic skills. In fact, they essentially wanted to join EYL course, due to the majority who joined EYL course is female, they did not take EYL course.

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