

An Analysis of Parents' Attitude towards TEFL in Islamic Elementary School of Wahdah Islamiyah

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Abstract

This study is qualitative research that aimed to understand the parents' opinion and attitude toward TEFL at Elementary School of Wahdah Islamiyah. The study focused on the issue of the clash between Islamic values and Western values in learning English. The 5 participants were chosen based on the educational background: Master's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Senior High School, Junior High School and Elementary School. The research data were obtained by the interviewing from 5 participants. The protocol consists of 10 questions. The results are: 1). The opinion of parents who were interviewed as participants indicates positive opinions and supported the implementation of English learning in Islamic school, 2). The participants considered English lesson as important lesson for their children, 3). The attitudes shown by the participants towards English lesson in Islamic schools are a positive attitude, a supportive attitude and a constructive attitude in the development and process of English learning in Islamic schools, 4). The parents' positive attitude indicated on how they try to help their children in learning English and also refused the idea of removing English lesson from Islamic elementary school, 5). The participants, consist of parents of students from Wahdah Islamiyah Elementary school, have flexible mindset and open-minded, 6). Great synergy among parents and teachers in educational environment at school would enhance the quality of English learning.

Keywords: *Parents' opinion, attitude, TEFL, Islamic school*

INTRODUCTION

English in Indonesia is foreign language and only a small number of people in this country use it as a daily language in communication. However, there are few communities maintain English as secondary language in communication due to some reasons (Musyahda, 2002). In academic world, English has taken a big role. It used in communication and some scholars are now familiar in English because it is a basic skills they need to achieve. The use of English in daily life also easily found among the entertainment program in television and other media, in seminars and few cases in some workplaces (Azis, 2003).

In Indonesia, Islam is the largest religion and has its own type education such as Islamic schools and universities. Islamic education showed large developments inside the country. There are many educational institutions using Islamic background such as *Sekolah Islam Terpadu* (Islamic School), *Madrasah* and *Pondok Pesantren* which considered as traditional Islamic educational institution (Azra, 2014).

In terms of the question of how Islamic schools deal with the issue of “westernization” in learning English, it seems that a great number of Muslim parents are worried where their children might get “westernized” and considered as negative where it seem contradicts with Islamic principal values and teachings. It is claimed that a clash might still there between the language teaching of English and the Islamic principals in a country of Islam majority (Dan, Haroon and Naysmith, 1996).

In the research of the English teaching and literature in Muslim world, Hyde (1994), stated that in Morocco, English is considered as the vehicle of colonialism, it was the result of the long history of French and Spanish imperialism in the land of Morocco.

The same issue slightly arises in Indonesia as the trend of *Hijrah* in these years. The phenomena of *Hijrah* community made the people interested to apply more Islamic culture originating from the Middle East. This spiritual closeness to Islamic culture or Middle Eastern culture raises a little sentiment towards other cultures that are considered non-Islamic cultures, namely western culture. English lessons which of course are claimed to have originated from Britain, the representatives of the western people, for some people in Islamic society are considered unimportant things to learn.

This research aims to investigate the clash between Islamic values and English lesson at school through research question namely; what do the parents think about TEFL and what are the parents’ attitudes toward EFL at Islamic school?

METHOD

The research conducted at Islamic Elementary School of Wahdah Islamiyah Gowa. Participants of this research consist of 5 parents of students at Islamic Elementary School of Wahdah Islamiyah Gowa. The chosen participants are the parents of students from third to sixth grade; those grades already obtained EFL in their classes. The participants will be divided according to the educational background: Master’s degree, Bachelor’s degree, Senior high school Junior high school, and Elementary school. The data was obtained from interview which consisted of 10 questions. This research used qualitative data analysis using Miles and Huberman’s model.

FINDINGS

1. Parents’ opinion about EFL

There were 5 questions asking parents’ opinion about EFL at their children school. The first question was warming-up question asking what was their reason in choosing Islamic school rather than State school. After that the following questions were: what is your opinion about EFL becomes obligatory subject in SDIT Wahdah Islamiyah Gowa? What is your opinion toward the issue that mentioned EFL does not contain Islamic materials? Do you think learning EFL is wasting time? What is your opinion toward the issue that the children of Islamic society absorb Western culture during the EFL study process?

The researcher asked the participants about their reason behind choosing Islamic school rather than State school. The answers were quite similar among participants.

a. SR

“The reason I put my child in SDIT Wahdah Islamiyah Gowa rather than state school, of course there are particular considerations to me. One of them is that in SDIT there are lessons that are included in the SD curriculum that do not exist in state schools. For example, there are lessons such as reading and writing the Quran, memorizing the Quran Hadith and also lessons in Arabic and English.”

“If I look at it, English is a very important lesson for our children to be obtained from an early age. And it would be nice from an early age for our children to be equipped with English lesson.”

“Of course I also do not understand the opinion with these groups from which side it says it is not Islamic. In my opinion English is one of the most important lessons to be taught to our children from an early age. Because in English it also teaches the manners of fellow friends, fellow parents, siblings, in English conversations and the language is also very good.”

b. SS

“We want to see our children become pious children and of course their educational background will definitely take influence. Our desire to have children who are pious, especially Islamic schools, have a background of *Tahfidz*, memorization of the Quran, yes, now if we think children should be fortified with things like that, especially nowadays there are many stories about the effects of technology, what social media. So if we don't protect our children, at least in terms of education, we are worried that they will be affected by negative things.”

“We personally have the view that English is actually an important lesson, as we know English is an international language and what is more, and in this globalization era, it is possible that our children will interact with foreigners in future.”

“In terms of content, it is Islamic or not, personally it depends on the teacher. How can he explain to his students the things his students deserved to understand?”

c. RH

“Of course we want to bring our child closer to religion, yes, if we compare it to state schools, yes, in state schools, it can be said that religious education only once a week. If we go to Islamic schools, we hope that religious knowledge can be more here. Of course we want to have pious children, who are close to religion.”

“We, as parents, see English lesson as important things, especially if we look at this era, a digital era like this where more information is also using English.”

“The teachers who teach this subject, can explain when there may be a non-Islamic story that is appointed, it is the role of the teacher to provide explanations to direct it into Islamic content, and to direct the children towards Islamic values using methods.”

d. SP

“The reason is in Islamic schools to learn religion and English. The teachers are also educated people, people who learn religious knowledge.”

A5: "For me, yes, just follow the local school regulations."

Q6: "Even though the government does not recommend it, is it okay to learn English at school?"

A6: "Yes, no problem. It is an additional knowledge.

A10: "It's okay because Muslims also go abroad. Most people also use English."

Q11: "So you think this is also needed by Muslims?"

A11: "Yes, it is also needed."

e. RD

A3: "Yes, so that the subjects are good, the main thing is that sir."

Q4: "What is your hope attending *Fajar* in this school, Sir?"

A4: "Yes, hopefully, *Fajar* will achieve his dream."

Q5: "Why not the state school, Sir?"

A5: "Because it is good there, the Quran memorization program."

Q6: "What else, sir, besides that program?"

A6: "The social intercourse is also good"

A7: "Yes, both are good, Sir. Religious subjects are good, English lesson is good too"

Q8: "Are you happy with your children learning English at school?"

A8: "Yes, even better.

"Yes, as parent, that's fine. His English is good, religious subjects are also good."

The answers from parents were various and indicated positive opinions and supported the implementation of English learning in Islamic school. The participants considered English lesson as important lesson for their children, even though English lesson are not included in religious lessons.

2. Parents' attitude towards EFL

There were 5 questions asking parents' attitude towards EFL at their children school; How do you respond when you know that EFL is taught in early stages in school? What will you do if your child finds difficulties in learning EFL at school? What will you do if your child is expected to be good in Islamic subjects; however he/she is better in EFL? How do you respond when your child has a dream to become an English teacher? Do you agree or disagree, EFL subject is erased from school curriculum? What is your reason?

The researcher asked the participants about their attitude on Learning EFL at early stages in school.

a. SR

"My attitude is to accept it well because it is necessary for our children to be taught from an early age, to be introduced early in English lesson. So it's okay and even better."

"If my child is having difficulty learning English at school, maybe from the school, it can add more lessons, for example adding more lessons for English, like providing English tutoring outside school hours."

"If my child is good in terms of lessons or in the field of English lesson, then Alhamdulillah. It does not mean abandoning other lessons. His English is good, Alhamdulillah, his recitation is also good, and his memorization has increased; now this is certainly something we really want."

b. SS

"We agree. It needs to be filtered what is appropriate for elementary school children, so that English is not too hard to learn."

"We help him study sir. At least there is a dictionary provided, for example, may be in in daily activities, we teach him numbers like one two three, the point is parents are helping the child."

"Still, the children need to understand that the most important thing is how we study this religion, so even though he is good at English, it's okay for him to develop his skills ... understand him, whatever intelligence he has, the most important is religion."

c. RH

Q10: "So we can conclude that you agree on starting English lesson at an early age like this?"

A10: "Yes."

"We don't want to burden ourselves when our children are not able to. Yes, we also teach them the best we can, with the efforts That's why we tried first to ask the teacher, how to solve it."

"If indeed the result is that they are better at English, then it is the will of Allah, it may have goodness in it."

d. SP

A23: "For me, I just agree with the school policy."

Q24: "That means just follow the school policy? Just agree with school?"

A24: "Yes."

A25: "If I don't know what to do if there are difficulties in children's study, I just tell them to study more."

A26: "Told them to study, to look for it, buy dictionary and so on"

Q27: "So you will try to find the way, Sir?"

A27: "Yes."

A28: "We glad if children are good at it."

Q29: "It turns out that children are smarter in worldly knowledge, knowledge of English. How about it? "

A29: "Accepted too. Yes. "

Q30: "So the religious lessons still keep going?"

A30: "Keep going."

Q31: "It means just agree with it. Supported the children sir?"

A31: "Supporting them of course. Because we don't really understand the subject."

e. RD

A19: "Proud ..."

Q20: "That's a good thing right sir?"

A20: "Yes, that's good."

"Yes, I usually feel sorry for Fajar. It was his mother who taught him. His mother used to teach him."

A26: "In my opinion both lessons are good, also religion is good."

Q27: "So both lessons are good, right Sir?"

A27: "Yes."

The attitudes shown by the participants towards English lesson in Islamic schools are a positive attitude, a supportive attitude and a constructive attitude in the development and process of English learning in Islamic schools.

DISCUSSIONS

1. Parents' opinion about EFL

The parents agreed about the obligation of English subject at the Islamic school where their children studied. They consider English lesson to be an important lesson for their children in the current era of globalization which requires people to understand English.

Parents when asked about the issue that English is a non-Islamic subject, their disagreement implied by the answers given by the parents. English is considered contain the same social values as what Islam teaches, such as how to socialize with people around them, such as in internal family, to friends and society in general.

The participants also did not agree if English is considered a futile lesson and a waste of time. According to the parents, although this lesson in English is not a religious lesson, it is very important in its position in the life of a Muslim, especially if the English skills are used in useful things such as in *Da'wah*.

The interviewed parents considered that there is no problem imitating the western culture in life if it was good and as long as it did not conflict with Islamic values.

2. Parents' attitude towards EFL

Parents do not mind if their children learn English at a young age, namely grade 3 of elementary school. Even though it looks not in accordance with the government's direction, the participants showed positive attitude and agree on the school's decision to include English as a subject that must be learned.

Meanwhile when their children have difficulty in learning English, they will try to find a way out of these difficulties. These efforts include trying to put their children in additional learning programs, teaching their own children, asking for help from teachers at school and buying dictionaries.

Participants showed positive attitude and support the learning process of English. However, they still hope that their children will also be smart in religious studies as the original goal of their children being included in Islamic schools. This indicates that the parents who were interviewed prioritized religious studies over other subjects, even though they did not show resistance if their children were better at learning English.

The participants admitted that they would not prohibit their children from having dreams of becoming English teachers. The interview results did not show any rejection if their children wanted to become English teachers.

There are four people who disagreed when English lesson are removed from school, and there is one person who agreed. The reason why they disagreed if English lesson were removed from the curriculum, because they considered English lesson is a knowledge that has goodness in it. It is very unfortunate if children do not get this knowledge. Meanwhile, participant who agreed that if English lesson were removed from school did not show any resistance to the

content of the English lesson. But he assumed that parents of students should follow what the school had decided to do, including decisions about eliminating certain subjects.

CONCLUSIONS

The opinion of parents who were interviewed as participants indicates positive opinions and supported the implementation of English learning in Islamic school.

The participants considered English lesson as important lesson for their children, even though English lesson are not included in religious lessons. They think that English is a knowledge which if used properly; it can be included as beneficial knowledge, a kind of worship in Islam.

The attitudes shown by the participants towards English lesson in Islamic schools are a positive attitude, a supportive attitude and a constructive attitude in the development and process of English learning in Islamic schools.

The attitude of the participants showed their full support on English learning process at school, this indicated on how they try to help their children in learning English and even support them if their children become English teachers in the future. They also refused the idea of removing English lesson from Islamic elementary school.

The participants, consist of parents of students from Wahdah Islamiyah Elementary school, have flexible mindset, open-minded, and they do not hesitate to accept outside culture (western culture) as one of the education for their children as long as still in line with Islamic values.

Great synergy among parents and teachers in educational environment at school would enhance the quality of English learning.

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