

EXPLORING STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH TEACHER STEREOTYPE: THE IMPACT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This research was conducted with the aim of exploring students' perceptions of the stereotypes of English teachers and their impact on teaching and learning activities. A qualitative approach was used to complete this research. The participants in this study were ninth grade students of the first Islamic high school in Tangerang. The instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview to answer research questions. The results found in this study were that there were 4 stereotypes in education that emerged based on students' opinions. The first stereotypes that emerge are gender stereotypes; where students prefer to be taught by female teachers than male teachers. This is due to the creation of a comfortable atmosphere when a female teacher teaches. Then the second is age stereotypes; students prefer to be taught by younger teachers than older ones. Students feel happier because the class atmosphere created is not monotonous like when taught by older teachers. Lastly, racial and religious stereotypes; students do not feel the influence of race and religion so that it does not have an impact on teaching and learning activities.

Keywords: Impact, Stereotypes, Students' Perception, Teaching and Learning Activities

INTRODUCTION

The teacher is one of the sources of learning in English as a foreign language class other than books. It is undeniable; teachers play an important role in helping students meet their needs in learning. In teaching, teachers usually use various methods for their students. Teaching methods are also one of the keys for students to be successful in the learning process. In addition to the learning methods used by teachers, teacher quality is also needed in order to achieve predetermined learning criteria.

Karnoto (2012) explained that learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia has the same situation as in Japan. In Japan, learning English shows a relatively difficult condition because; 1) Foreign languages are opposed by Japanese conservatives; 2) Japanese are not active English speakers; 3) Japanese people are usually careful in making language mistakes. These things may also be the same problem in learning foreign languages in Indonesia; it also depends on many other factors. The personality and characteristics of the teacher are other things that can affect learning. Every teacher must have unique characteristics and personalities that underpin the behaviors, ideas, and relationships that arise every day. As an individual, the teacher will of course show the most ideal characteristics and personality to his students both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Some of the personality elements shown by the teacher can form a certain stereotype for students and of course can influence learning activities.

Furthermore, stereotypes are beliefs that are over-generalized to certain groups or individuals. Kurylo (2012) described stereotype as a connection between a group (or groups) and the trait(s)

associated with that group (or groups) . There are many types of stereotype, for example about a person's personality, preferences, and abilities of a person or group. Stereotypes can occur in any sector, for example in race; Asians proficient at mathematics (Chang and Au, 2008), then on the concept of gender; Nurses have been identified with female attributes and female jobs (White, 2006).

The existence of stereotypes inherent in teaching and learning activities is certainly not an easy thing for teachers. Likewise with the stereotypes attached to English teachers, of course, it will have an impact on learning activities. Some research results show that stereotypes about English teachers have an effect on learning. Auwal (2016) revealed the results of his research that students prefer to actively interact with native English teachers than non-native English teachers. Students assume that native English teachers have more competent, skilled, and more experienced knowledge than non-native English teachers.

This study will focus on identifying the growing stereotypes of English teachers by looking at several aspects such as: race, age, gender, and culture. The purpose of this study was to explore the developing stereotypes by knowing students' perceptions and to investigate the impact of these stereotypes on learning activities. The results of this study are expected to help teachers to improve their performance based on students' perceptions of the criteria they expect in learning activities.

METHOD

This study was planned to explore junior high school students' perceptions. Thus, the researcher will use a descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative research could be a form of social policy that emphasizes how people perceive and add up their perspectives in order to understand people's social realities (Mohajan, 2018). In addition, the qualitative design of this study allows participants to share their perspectives in a descriptive narrative.

To collect data in this study, the author will use the interview method. The subjects in this study were students of class IX junior high school in Tangerang, with a total of ten people. Consists of 5 men and 5 women. Subjects were selected from different cultural backgrounds. Before conducting the interview, the researcher will first arrange several questions with a predetermined theme. Furthermore, participants will be told in advance what the background, objectives, and results of this research are briefly. Researchers will also notify participants that all kinds of identities provided by participants will be kept confidential; Participants will also be asked for prior consent to conduct a recorded interview.

After the data is collected, the next step is to analyze the data from the interviews. First, the researcher will change the audio from the interview into text in a word document; then the researcher will read carefully the answers with the themes that have been determined from each interview to analyze the code obtained from the interviews that have taken place.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Students' perception on stereotype among English teacher

Many stereotypes about English teachers circulate as a result of student opinions. Some of them are shared by students, while others are not.

a. Gender

All participants in the interview stated that they had studied English and knew their English teacher well. Some of them expressed different opinions about the gender of their teacher. AP and RFI students explained that they prefer to be taught by women while UY students prefer to be taught by male teachers. The rest said that gender had no effect on them.

Student AP and RFI has same opinion:

"Women, because women are more detailed when explaining than men."

In contrast to student AP and RFI, student UY argued:

"I prefer male teachers because male teachers joke around and don't feel bad while female teachers are the opposite"

The rest of the students said that gender does not affect learning; the most important thing is how a teacher conveys material in class. As we can see here, the most answers showed that teachers' gender not much influence on students.

b. Age

Almost all of the students answered that they wanted to be taught by younger teachers rather than older ones.

Student AB stated:

"Younger, because I feel more connected."

Furthermore, student SA stated almost the same thing:

"The younger one sis, because I feel more relaxed while talking."

In contrast with his two friends, student AH thinks:

"The older one, because they are more experienced."

In conclusion, teachers who have a younger age excel in terms of approaching students because their age ranges are relatively close. While older teachers are considered superior in terms of their experience in teaching more and more mature. However, it does not mean that the old teacher is no longer worthy of teaching his students.

c. Race

Different from the previous two, there are no racial stereotypes from students for their English teachers because they have never been taught by an English teacher. Likewise with teachers who have different regional and ethnic backgrounds; Shiva doesn't mind this either. As HFP students said, "Teachers of other races are sometimes funnier, so they can be more fun when chatting."

d. Religion

Just like racial stereotypes, religious stereotypes also do not exist in students' opinions. In a sense, they assume there are no problems that will affect learning related to religious differences. Student UY argued that "Religious differences can make each other respect each other and every religion has its limits so it doesn't matter in study." We can see clearly that religion doesn't give any impact in teaching and learning activities.

2. English teacher stereotypes impact on teaching and learning activities

This section will discuss and analyze the impact of the stereotype of English teachers on teaching and learning activities. Participants were asked what the impact of some stereotypes about English teachers was; most of the impacts experienced by students came from gender and age stereotypes while the rest had no impact.

a. Students are often bored when they are taught by older teachers; they prefer to learn from younger teachers

The results of the interview show that the age of the teacher has an effect on teaching and learning activities; namely between old and young teachers. Some students think that older teachers are boring and make the classroom atmosphere a bit stiff. In addition, there are also students who think that older teachers teach in a long-winded manner.

In this case, student RF argued:

“More fun when young teachers teach; Old teachers are boring because they focus too much on teaching and joke less.”

Also student ZH added:

“If the teacher is older sometimes there are problems because they explain long-winded.”

In contrast to older teachers, young teachers get a lot of positive stereotypes because they manage to bring a comfortable and relaxed learning atmosphere.

As student RIW argued:

“Younger teacher being fun and relax while teaching.”

Student SA even made it clear with her statement that the younger teacher taught casually because of their small age difference.

“The younger teachers because they are more relaxed and the age is not much difference, while the older teachers are too serious and strict.”

From some of the statements above, it can be concluded that a lot of boredom is created when students are taught by older teachers so that it can reduce students' interest in paying attention to the explanations given; on the other hand, a comfortable atmosphere is created when a younger teacher teaches and makes students relaxed in teaching and learning activities.

b. Students are more comfortable studying with female teachers than male teachers

In the section, some students think that they feel more comfortable when taught by female teachers than male teachers. This can affect teaching and learning activities, many students prefer female teachers because they tend to bring a comfortable atmosphere in class.

As student RIW mention:

“Female teachers are more detailed in giving explanations and also have a motherly figure so that I feel comfortable when studying in class.”

Student AP also explains some of the characteristics of female teachers who make them comfortable while studying, as:

“Female teachers are usually good, especially when explaining the material so we can ask clear questions; different from men.”

From some of the statements above, we can conclude that there are several characteristics possessed by female teachers that have an impact on a comfortable classroom atmosphere. Like motherhood, so students feel comfortable and don't hesitate to ask deeper questions if there is a subject matter that is not understood.

c. All students enjoy studying with teachers who have good learning methods, regardless of race and religion

Here students try to give their opinion if English teachers who are not native speakers can also be considered competent in their fields as long as they have good skills in explaining and mastering the material. In addition, they also added that race and religion will not affect teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

As student HFP answered:

"No, sometimes teachers from other races are more fun to talk with."

In addition, according to his opinion, other students also conveyed that teachers who are not native speakers are not better than native speakers. They also explained that the differences in race and religion of teachers would not be a problem in teaching and learning activities. Students also stated that a good teacher in teaching is when they can convey material in detail and can be understood by students.

As evidence, student BU argued:

"It doesn't matter if it's not a native speaker because he has learned and has a good and competent skill."

Furthermore, student ZAKP also mentions:

"In my opinion, if you want to learn you can all teach, there won't be anyone can't."

Last but not least student ZAKP also giving respect reason:

"I have never been affected by religion while learning because we should not mix religious and learning."

So far almost all participants are not affected by their religion and personal race. They tend to respect this; especially they also argue that competent teachers do not have to come from native English speakers. As long as teachers can learn and competent when teaching, students will consider the teacher to be competent in their fields.

Discussion

After the description and analysis of the interview, data shows that there are 4 stereotypical English teachers that appear based on student opinions. In this study also not all students stated all stereotypes like those in Chapter Two. Some stereotypes are considered influencing learning activities in class. The first racial stereotype, in this case researchers found no impact of racial stereotypes; where students do not feel differences if they are taught by teachers who have a cultural background with them. It also does not guarantee that learning with teachers who have different races or cultures will make the classroom atmosphere different.

The results of the interviews also showed that students felt subjective based on what other people believed, thus will led them to these stereotypes. This finding is in line with the opinion of Schneider (2004) which states that stereotype is a sociological approach that mainly involves social class. It regards stereotypes as fundamentally inaccurate and harmful generalizations of group traits that indicate the stereotype's fundamental biases or other internal reasons.

As a result, the stereotypes that students have experienced are labeled as educational stereotypes. This situation shows that students' interest in learning is not supported by logical reasons, like some students perceive their teacher no longer on what the teacher's expertise is but more based on the nature of human being. One of them is the emergence of gender stereotypes. Almost all of the students interviewed stated that they preferred to be taught by female teachers compared to male teachers. The tendency of students in choosing this is due to the experiences and feelings that arise during students studying at school. The sense of comfort and motherhood of a female teacher is the reason most often expressed by students. Moreover, Attention is a proclivity or behavior that favors one side of the learning process over the other based on the gender of the teacher (Colom et al., 2000). As the result, this can be indicated as a gender stereotype.

Next we turn to other educational stereotypes; in this study also emerged age stereotypes perceived by students. According to age stereotypes, older teachers are not as good as younger teachers. When students are learning, one of the most important factors to consider is their age. Students prefer teachers who are relaxed, at ease, and aware of the needs of young students (Cuddy et al., 2005). In addition, students also added that they chose teachers by comparing their experiences in other subjects. They convey that the atmosphere built by a teacher in the classroom will affect teaching and learning activities. Raharja (2007) argues that the learning process is created by the teacher. Clearly, this means that teachers are responsible for creating a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere for their students. Another stereotype that this study tries to prove is the religious stereotype. In terms of religion, the students compactly stated that religion would not have an influence on learning activities; in a sense, the religion adopted by the teacher will not be a consideration for students to take classes.

Furthermore, to find out whether there is an impact of the stereotype of the English teacher on learning, the researcher explores more deeply the results of the interview. First, students will quickly feel bored if taught by an older teacher because of the rigid classroom atmosphere; On the other hand, if they are taught by a young teacher, they will feel happy. Second, if it is taught by a female teacher, the students will feel a comfortable class atmosphere, whereas if it is taught by a male teacher, the students will feel the opposite. Last, students prefer to be taught by teachers who provide detailed explanations of the learning materials regardless of race and religion the teacher has. Overall, students believe that even though taking sides does not necessarily guarantee the existence of stereotypes that will have an influence on learning activities. This may be because female teachers have more numbers than men and have a gentle and easy nature to provide comfort, which is the nature of a woman. However, this is not a determining factor because all students think that stereotypes can be broken as long as the teacher who teaches has superior competence.

Some students said that the stereotypes above also affected their boredom and discomfort in class. One student stated that he sometimes felt lazy to study if he was taught by an older teacher because of the monotonous learning and complicated explanations. The student also added a difference if he was taught by a younger teacher because a younger teacher could make students more enthusiastic in learning. Meanwhile, according to another student, male teachers are the same as older teachers because they tend to make the classroom atmosphere feel boring while studying. On the other hand, almost all students agree that female teachers can create a class atmosphere that is not monotonous. As a consequence, this study provides the same results as the study conducted by Schuster and Martiny (2017) which stated that stereotypes can have an influence on profession choice.

However, some stereotypes need to be explored more deeply. Some students argue that the existing stereotypes are still relative. Are there stereotypes that have a major influence on teaching and learning activities such as gender and age stereotypes? It can be said that the general impact given by the two stereotypes is boredom and a decrease in students' understanding of the material explained by the teacher because of the teacher's limitations in delivering the material. In the case of racial stereotypes, students said this was relative. This can be interpreted positively, such as when students think that if a teacher who is a native speaker has a clear articulation advantage when pronouncing vocabulary compared to a non-native teacher. Even so, it does not mean that negative impacts will not appear. There are also some students who choose non-native teachers because they admit that they have limitations in learning English so that sometimes they need to learn to use their mother tongue.

CONCLUSION

This study examines and discusses how students perceive the existing stereotypes for their English teacher. In this study the researchers concluded several things; first, although there are many stereotypes that can be explored for truth in this study, the researcher managed to find 4 accurate stereotypes in the world of education. The two most dominantly perceived by students are gender and age stereotypes. The rest, the two stereotypes of race and religion can be said to not appear because students do not feel there is a difference between teachers who have racial and religious differences. In addition, students also experience several things that have an impact on learning activities. The monotonous atmosphere and limited material delivery by older teachers caused students' interest in listening and listening to the material presented; as a result, students will be constrained in doing assignments or practice questions. Therefore, students need an ideal teacher figure who can control the atmosphere and condition of the class and a teacher who can understand the condition of their students and make the atmosphere in teaching and learning activities in the classroom comfortable. Thus, it can be concluded that stereotypes can have an impact on teaching and learning activities that lead to positive things.

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