

A Descriptive Analysis of Young Learners' Behaviors toward TEFL

Choiril Anwar
Universitas Islam Sultan Agung
Semarang, Indonesia
choirilanwar@unissula.ac.id

Wa Ode Runi Kusumawarni
Universitas Islam Sultan Agung
Semarang, Indonesia
runnykusuma20@gmail.com
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Corresponding Author:

Choiril Anwar

choirilanwar@unissula.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research was surely aimed at investigating young learners' behaviors toward the teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). This qualitative research used descriptive method. It was conducted in SD Islam Sultan Agung 4 Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The population of this research was the students of grade 5 and students of grade 6 in the academic year of 2017/2018 with the total sample was 70 students, consisting of 32 students of Grade VA and 38 students of Grade VI. In this research, the researchers used convenience sampling to determine the sample of the research. The independent variable of this study was teaching English as a foreign language and the dependent variable was young learners' behavior functions. The data collection techniques of this research were through 1) observation and 2) close-ended questionnaire. The results of the research,

then, indicated that students had a high motivation in following the lesson given by the teacher. The young learners showed positive behaviors toward the teaching English as a foreign language, such as paid attention to the teacher's explanation, wrote down and read the material, actively and bravely in asking questions to the teacher, and made the vocabularies list to memorize new English words.

Keywords: *Teaching English as a foreign language, Behavior, Young learners.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a very important tool that is needed by the people in interaction. According to Pringgawidagda (2002), language is the main tool for communicating in human life, both individually and socially. By using language, people can do the social interactions by expressing their desires, feelings, and hopes. One of many important aspects of language, which enables the speakers to use it in its social function, is language acquisition. Therefore, this research focuses on teaching English to young learners (e.g. “anyone under the age of 18” (Copland & Garton, 2014)). The objective of this study was to investigate their behaviors toward the teaching of English as a foreign language. The samples of the research were the fifth and sixth grade students of SD Islam Sultan Agung 4 Semarang in the academic year of 2017/2018.

Language is very helpful for young learners, especially when they are in primary school. According to Zubaidah (2003), through language, young learners can connect, share experiences, and improve intellectuals, in order to their development of knowledge and language skills. Moreover, as a communication tool, language also helps primary school students to understand the material provided by teachers and even assists them in interacting in their environment.

In facing of the development of the times, the mastery of foreign languages is an effort made by various countries to improve the quality of human resources. Nowadays, English is one of the most commonly used languages in the world. The statement is reinforced by Held et al., in Condruz-Băcescu (2013) that English has also become the central language of communication in business, politics, administration, science and academia, as well as being dominant language of globalized advertising and popular culture.

According to Harmer (2007), English is applied as a compulsory subject in school and included in the curriculum. English is the language generally introduced in primary schools in the world (Copland, Garton, & Burns, 2014; Garton, 2014; Nguyen, 2016). “For many years now, theoretical considerations and practices related to teaching English to young learners (TEYL) have been excessively investigated” (Ekin & Damar, 2013). In Indonesia, English is taught from primary school to high school. In state primary school, English subject is taught from grade 4. Meanwhile for private primary school, it starts from grade 1.

In primary schools, students should at least study three languages, such as *Bahasa Indonesia* as the national language, vernacular (adjusting their respective regions), and English as a foreign language. This can be a consideration for English teachers in order to make the English teaching as enjoyable as possible in order to attract students' learning interests and make them not easily bored.

As a foreign language, learning English is not an easy thing especially for students (young learners) in primary school. It is because after learning English, the students do not apply it into their daily communication (Setiyadi, 2006). Therefore, students will find it difficult to be learned. In facing the difficulties in learning English, students will give different responses or reactions. This shows that the teaching of English in primary school affects the behavior that will be shown by students in the classroom.

RESEARCH METHODS

As the researchers mentioned in the previous part, this research was a descriptive study that investigated the young learners' behaviors toward the teaching of English as a foreign language for the fifth and sixth grade students of SD Islam Sultan Agung 4 Semarang in the academic year of 2017/2018. The researchers used two kinds of instruments such as narrative observation sheet and close-ended questionnaire.

According to Airasian (2012), a questionnaire is a written collection of self-report questions that need to be answered by the respondents. Furthermore, Zohrabi (2013) states that questionnaires are doubtless one of the primary sources of obtaining data in any research. According to Arikunto (2010), based on how to answer it, questionnaire is divided into two types such as open-ended questionnaire and closed-ended questionnaire. In open-ended questionnaire, the researcher gives the opportunity to the respondents to answer the question by their own sentence. Meanwhile, close-ended questionnaire means that the respondents choose one of the options or answers that have been provided by the researcher. In this research, the researchers used the closed-ended questionnaire, considering not only about the sample, who are primary school students, but also close-ended questionnaire is easier to analyze.

Another method used by the researchers was narrative observation. According to Burns (2010), in narrative observation, the researchers may make notes like telling the story of the events that the researcher observes by freehand writing. The researchers used narrative observation sheet to observe the students' behavior (activities) in the teaching and learning process in English class. According to Diedrich in Sardiman (2006), there are several kinds of students' activities in the classroom such as visual activities, oral

activities, listening activities, writing activities, motor activities, mental activities and emotional activities.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Based on those kinds of students' activities, here are some indicators of students' activities in the classroom based on researchers' observation followed by the students' respond to questionnaire and the critical discussion on them.

Observation

Students' sitting occupation

While the researchers were doing the observation on January 27th, 2018, in Grade VA, researchers found that before the teacher said greetings to start the lesson, few students were still standing up and did not want to sit yet. When the teacher started the class by saying greetings, the students who were standing up directly hurried to sit down to their seats. There were five students who came late but the teacher still allowed them to join the class and sit to their seats. There were four empty chairs because two students were sick and two students did not come without any information. Nevertheless, the seats were left empty and not occupied by other students present that day.

While observing in Grade VI on February 29th, 2018, researchers found that when teacher entered the classroom, they all have been sitting neatly in their respective seats, even before the teacher saying greetings to start the lesson. After that, the classroom door was closed and no students were late for English class. There were three students who were absent because they were sick, so their seats were left empty and no one occupied.

Student's preparation

After the students had occupied their seats, they prepared the necessary equipments for English lesson such as pen, eraser, notebook, LKS (worksheet) and dictionary. In grade VA's class, there were about three students who did not carry LKS, so they shared the same book with their friends. There was one student who lost the pen, so he borrowed his friend's pen to be used. The students already had their own eraser, so they did not have to borrow someone else's. While in class VI, there was one student who did not carry LKS, and they did the same thing that happened in the VA class which shared the LKS together. No student borrowed a pen or eraser to another friend.

Student's attentiveness

During the observation in both classes, i.e. class VA and class VI, the researchers saw that most of the students were very concerned to the teacher in explaining the material. Although in the class VA there were two students who were busy playing with their chair mate, while in class VI there were two students who were busy telling stories about something beyond the material when the teacher was explaining.

When the teacher gave instructions, the students paid attention and followed the instructions well. For the example when the teacher instructed the students to notice when their friend was asking or answering questions.

Student's thoroughness in reading material

Besides paying attention to the teacher who was explaining the material, the students read the material in the LKS to make them easier to understand. In class VI, researchers found that students read the material aloud along with the teacher. When there were students who pronounced the wrong word, the teacher justified. The students in the class VA read the material when the teacher said they would hold a quiz. For some students who did not carry LKS, they read the LKS together with their friends.

Raising questions

Researchers saw that in class VA, most of students actively asked the teacher about the material that they did not understand yet and the meaning of English words, such as famous, south, mosque, and the market. At that time, they were discussing about direction and location. The researchers also found that there were few students who asked their friends about the meaning of English words. They prefer asking questions to their friends to their teacher.

The researchers also found in the students of class VI, they actively asked the teacher about the material. The material was about describing people and objects. Researchers did not find any students who asked about the material to another student.

By asking questions to teachers as well as to other students, it shows that students have an effort to learn English during the lesson. They were not just silent when they had something to ask.

Students' note taking

Researchers observed that all students wrote down the material provided by the teacher, both in class VA and class VI. When the teacher mentioned the meaning of the words asked by one of the students, the other students directly wrote it down in their notebooks. Students also wrote down the material written by teachers on the board.

Students' teamwork capability

The data shows that the student's teamwork capability is very good for both class VA and class VI. VA class students were seen doing the task in groups, they gathered with other friends, shifted the bench and moved to their friend's desk. They appeared to discuss the given topic among others and they looked serious in doing the task.

While in class VI, researchers did not see any interaction among students to do the task in groups. This was because the teacher did not give the task to be doing in group. But when the teacher gave the question to one of the students, the other students were seen discussing and guessing the answer.

Students' independence in doing tasks

In doing the observation, the researchers did not see any students who did the task independently. It happened to the students of VA and students of VI. They were asking other friends' answer and even visiting other friends' desk to do the work even though it was an individual task.

Students' eagerness in following the lesson

During the observation in class VA and class VI, the researchers found that all of the students looked very enthusiastic in following the English lesson given by the teacher. The material was made as simple as possible by the teacher so that the students seemed enjoying the teaching and learning process. Especially when the teacher provided a game that tested the students' ability to memorize the English vocabulary. The game began when the teacher gave eraser to the student who sat in the front row in the left corner, after which they sang the song '*Balonku*' (my balloon) together. The student holding the eraser was asked to give the eraser to a friend next to him and the friend next to him had to give it to the other student beside him and so on until the song stopped at the word 'DOORR'. When the song stopped, the last student who held the eraser would be asked by the teacher to state the meaning of an English word. The teacher would give ten seconds to the student to find the meaning of the word and if, on the tenth count, the student could not answer it, then the student was asked to do funny actions and make the others laugh in front of the class.

Students' automatic response to questions

In this indicator, the researchers found that the students had been dared to answer the questions given by the teacher. Most of the students, who got questions from the teacher, answered the questions bravely. There were a small number of students who were still shy, although in the end they would answer the questions given by the teacher.

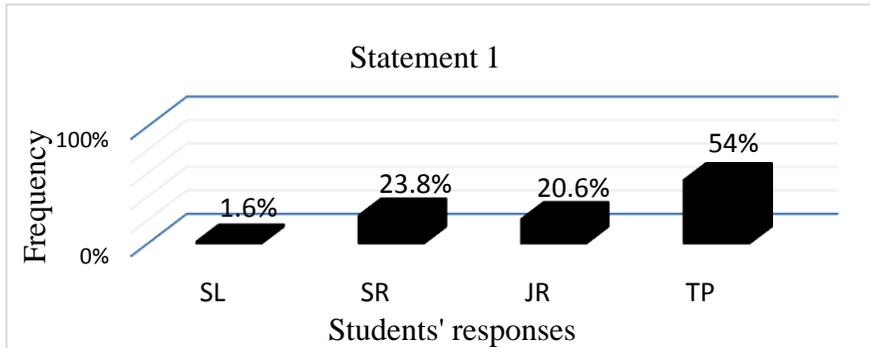
For example when one of the students was asked about the meaning of the word 'halte' and that student answered 'terminal'. Some of the other students laughed at that student, but the teacher continued to appreciate that student and gave the correct answer, i.e. 'bus stop'. The teacher also advised students not to laugh at their friends when they had wrong answer because they were all still learning English.

Questionnaire

The second method to collect the data was close-ended questionnaire. Ten statements were adapted from the aspects of behavior of the students in the classroom by Lavin (2011). However, the researchers modified the aspects, i.e. the amount of the time that the students study, notes that the students take, the students' attendance, the interactions with the teacher. The researcher presents the results of the close-ended questionnaire with its figures.

(1) 'I study the material of English lesson before that lesson began.'

The first statement of the questionnaire enquires the preparation of the students before attending the class. Figure 1 shows the results of the students' response.

Figure 1. Students' Attitude toward English Material before Class

Based on figure 1, there was 1.6% of the samples or one student, who chose *Selalu* (always) as the response to this statement. 23.8% of the samples or 15 students responded *Sering* (often). For the response *Jarang* (seldom), there were 20.6% of the samples or 13 students, who read the material before attending the class. Finally, 54% of the samples or 34 students responded that they *Tidak Pernah* (never) do this statement. Hence, it can be concluded that most of the students never study the material of English lesson before the lesson began.

(2) 'I write down the material given by the teacher.'

The second statement of the questionnaire questioning the students' activities during the class, particularly their attitudes toward the topic under discussion. The response of the students are presented on figure 2

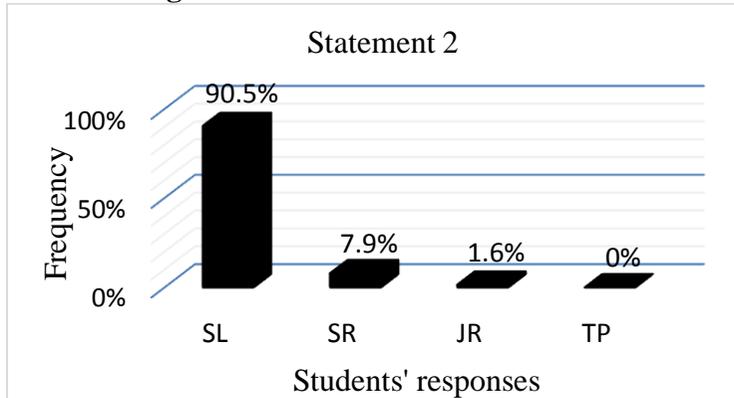
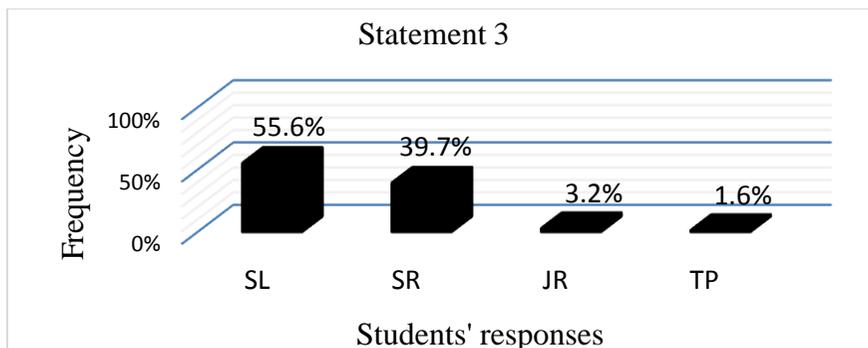
Figure 2. Students' Attitude on Class

Figure 2 shows that there were 90.5% of the samples or 57 students, who *Selalu* (always) wrote the material discussed on class. For the rest of the students, 7.9% of the samples or five students chose *Sering* (often), 1.6% of the samples or one student responded *Jarang* (seldom), and 0% or no one answered *Tidak Pernah* (never). The researchers concludes from the data that most of the students always write down the material given by the teacher.

(3) 'I attend the English class every week.'

The third statement describes students' attendance on class. Figure 3 shows the students' responses.

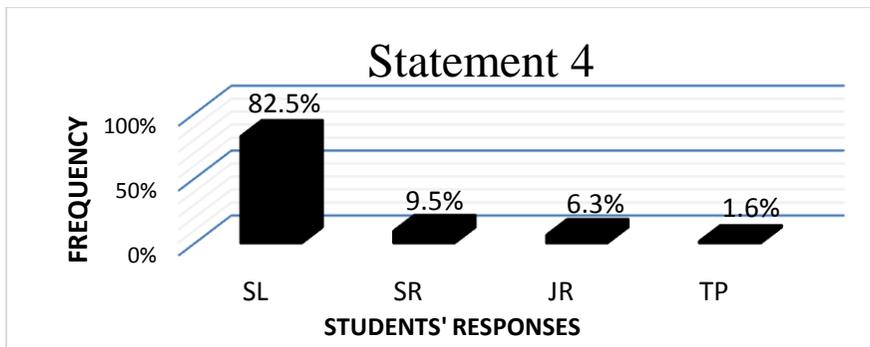
Figure 3. Students' Attendance on Class

There were 55.6% of the samples or 35 students, who *Selalu* (always) attended the class. For the response *Sering* (often), there were 39.7% or 25 students, who chose this option, 3.2% of the samples or two students, who chose *Jarang* (seldom), and only 1.6% or 1 student, who responded *Tidak Pernah* (never). The researcher concludes that most of the students always attend to the English class every week.

(4) 'I ask the teacher when there is material that I do not understand.'

The fourth statement of the questionnaire was arranged to analyze the aspect of students-teachers interactions.

Figure 4. Students' Responses to The Fourth Statement

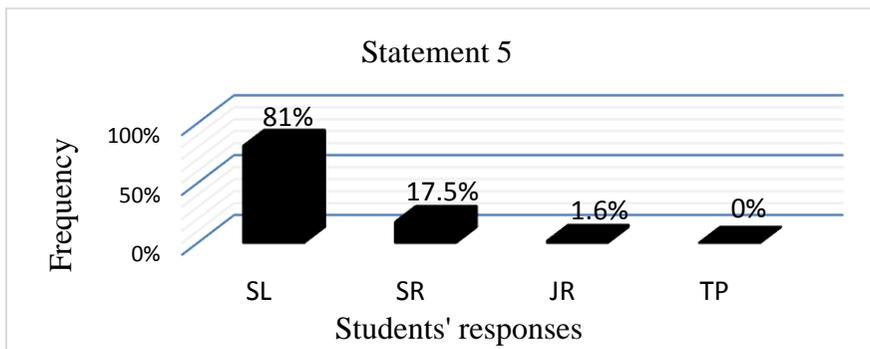


It can be seen from figure 4 that 82.5% of the samples or 52 students chose *Selalu* (always) as the response to this statement, 9.5% of the sample or six students responded *Sering* (often) and 6.3% of the sample or four students answered *Jarang* (seldom). For *Tidak Pernah* (never), there was only 1.6% of the sample or one student, who chose the option. From the description, it can be concluded that most of the students always ask the English teacher when they do not understand the lesson materials

(5) 'I make vocabularies list to be memorized.'

The fifth statement of the questionnaire was arranged based on notes that the students take. The results of the students' response are on figure 5.

Figure 5. Students' Responses to vocabularies list



It can be seen from figure 5 that there were 81% of the samples or 51 students, who *Selalu* (always) wrote new vocabularies on the vocabularies list. There were 17.5% of the samples or 11 students, who chose *Sering* (often) as the response. For *Jarang* (seldom), there was only 1.6% of the samples or one student. Meanwhile, 0% of the sample or no one responded *Tidak Pernah* (never) to this statement. The data inform that most of the students, to memorize vocabularies, always adds new vocabularies to their vocabularies list. It helps them to memorize new vocabularies.

(6) 'I study the material of English lesson before the examination began.'

The sixth statement of the questionnaire was arranged based on the amount of time allocated by the students to read the material of English lesson. The results of the students' response are on figure 6.

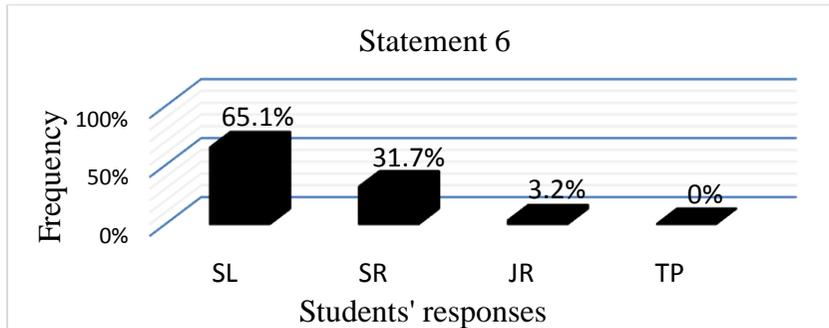
Figure 6. Students' attitude in facing examination

Figure 6 indicates that 65.1% of the samples or 41 students responded *Selalu* (always) to this sixth statement. For *Sering* (often), there were 31.7% of the samples or 20 students chose that response. Only 3.2% of the samples or two students responded *Jarang* (seldom) and 0% or no one chose *Tidak Pernah* (never). The findings indicates that most of the students always study the material of English lesson before the examination began.

(7) 'I pay attention attentively when the teacher is explaining.'

The seventh statement of the questionnaire reflected students-teacher interactions. Figure 7 informs the response.

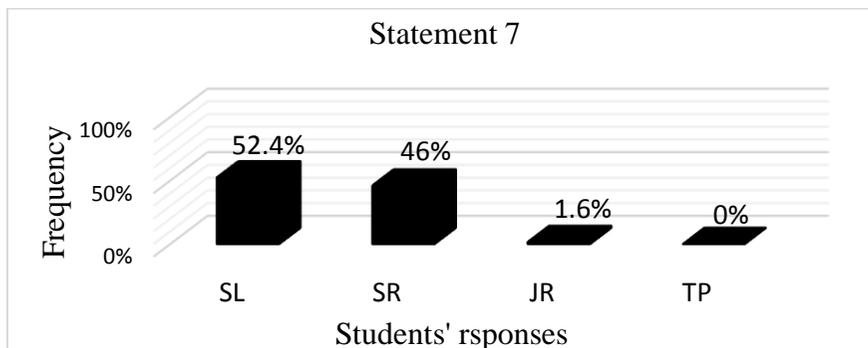
Figure 7. Students' Attentiveness

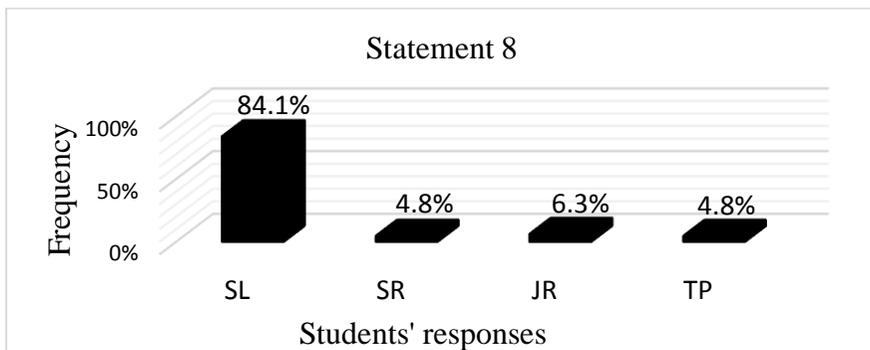
Figure 7 shows that there were 52.4% of the samples or 33 students, who responded *Selalu* (always) to this statement. Meanwhile, 46% of the samples or 29 students chose *Sering* (often), only 1.6% of the samples or one

student stated *Jarang* (seldom), and 0% or no one answered *Tidak Pernah* (never). It means that most of the students always pay attention attentively when the teacher is explaining.

(8) 'I follow the English class although my homework is not done yet.'

The eighth statement of the questionnaire questions the students' attendance on class. Figure 8 describes the students' attendance.

Figure 8. Students' Responses to Pupils' Attendance



From figure 8, it can be seen that 84.1% of the samples or 53 students *Selalu* (always) join the class. Meanwhile, only 4.8% of the samples or three students responded *Sering* (often) to this statement. For *Jarang* (seldom), there were 6.3% of the samples or four students chose it as the response. Finally, 4.8% of the samples or 3 students stated that they *Tidak Pernah* (never) attended the class when they did not do the homework. It can be concluded that most of the students always follow the English class although they did not finish their homework.

(9) 'I bravely answer the question that is given by the teacher.'

The ninth statement of the questionnaire discusses how the students respond the teacher's question. The students' response on are shown on figure 9.

Figure 9. Students' Responses to Teacher's Question

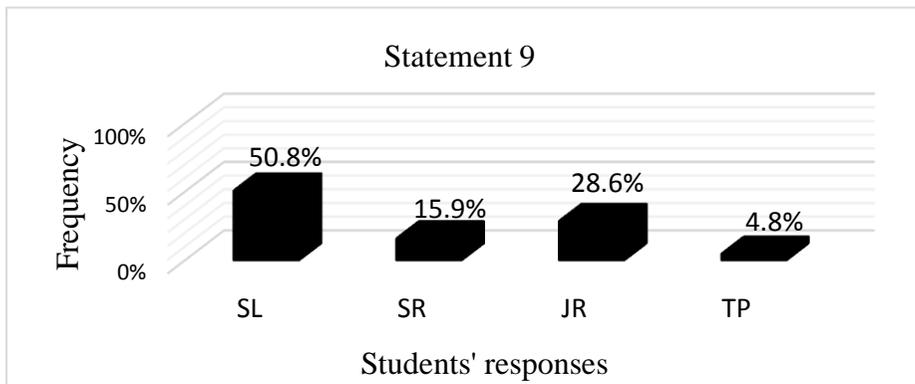
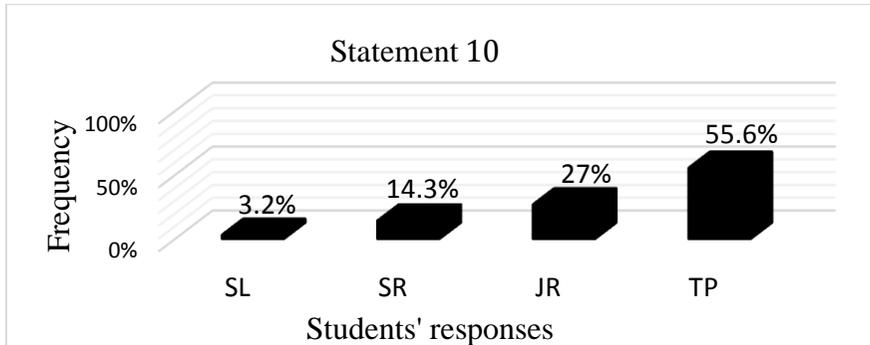


Figure 9 informs that 50.8% of the samples or 32 students chose *Selalu* (always) to respond teacher's question. There were 15.9% of the samples or 10 students responded *Sering* (often) to this statement. For the third option, there were 28.6% of the samples or 18 students, who *Jarang* (seldom) answer the question and only 4.8% of the samples or three students chose *Tidak Pernah* (never). The data describes that most of the students always bravely answer the question given by the teacher.

(10) 'I make the resume of the material in order to understand it easily.'

The tenth statement of the questionnaire is about the students' technique in learning. The students' the response are presented on figure 10.

Figure 10. Students' Responses indicating their attitude in learning



Based on figure 10, there were only 3.2% of the samples or two students, who always resumed the English materials. It helped them to understand the materials effortlessly. Meanwhile, 14.3% of the samples or nine students responded *Sering* (often), 27% of the samples or 17 students chose *Jarang* (seldom) and 55.6% of the samples or 35 students stated *Tidak Pernah* (never). The researchers concludes that most of the students never make the resume of the material as the technique to understand them easily.

Discussion

In the observation, the researchers found that, in the beginning, the students were afraid of answering the questions given by the teacher. This was due to the lack of English vocabulary that students had, so students would feel embarrassed and afraid if they give the wrong answer. Students also had difficulty in pronouncing a word or when they were asked to read a sentence by the teacher. That explanation is appropriate with the statement by Anwar and Fitriani (2016), “primary school students have many difficulties in learning English, especially in pronouncing and understanding the meaning of the words”. This shows that the most common difficulties encountered by primary school students are related to vocabulary and

pronunciation. The statement is also supported by Menakapriya (2016) stating that vocabulary and pronunciation are basics problems faced by students who learn English beside spelling, grammar and sentence formation.

Because of the difficulties students faced when learning English in the classroom, students realized and tried to actively ask the teacher about the meaning of words, how to pronounce words or about materials they did not understand. This shows that students' curiosity was very high in learning English so that the students actively asked the teacher when they had something that makes them confused. That statement was supported by the result of the questionnaire showing that 82.5% of the sample or 52 students chose *selalu* (always) as the response to the statement 'I ask the teacher when there is material that I do not understand'.

Besides asking the teacher, the students had another way to handle their difficulties in learning English. From the result of the questionnaire, 81% of the sample or 51 students responded *selalu* (always) to the statement 'I make the vocabularies list to be memorized'. It shows that the students did not keep silent when they get problems in learning English, particularly on understanding the meaning of English words; they did the efforts to cope with those difficulties.

From the result of observation, the researchers also found that the students had a high motivation in following the lesson given by the teacher. Researchers saw that several factors caused the students' behavior, such as the teacher could provide a comfortable classroom atmosphere so the students could enjoy the class. Besides, the teacher also conveyed the material as simple as possible, which did not make students dizzy. Other factors are that the students had high curiosity, the students were also very active in asking and answering the questions, and the students loved to move around and could not stay in their seats while doing the task given by the

teacher. The above statement related to the characteristics of young learners that they are different from adult learners; they have a lot of physical energy and emotionally excitable (Ellis and Brewster; 2002; Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). It shows that students were not burdened with the teaching of English as a foreign language at school even though they had to learn three languages such as *Bahasa Indonesia*, Javanese and English. Teaching English as a foreign language did not make them lazy to follow the lesson, it actually made them challenged in overcoming their difficulties in learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion mentioned, it comes to the conclusion that young learners showed the positive behaviors toward the teaching of English as a foreign language at school. The young learners showed that they paid attention to the teacher's explanation, wrote down and read the material, actively and bravely in asking questions to the teacher, and made the vocabularies list to be memorized.

The statement that the young learners paid attention to the teacher's explanation can be seen from the observation result that the students were very concerned to the teacher in explaining the material. The result of the questionnaire showed that most of the students always pay attention attentively when the teacher is explaining. The statement for the students wrote down and read the material can be seen from the observation and questionnaire results. The results showed that the students wrote down the material that is given by the teacher as well as read the material from the LKS. For the statement that the students actively and bravely raising questions to the teacher, it can be seen from the result of the observation explaining that the students actively asked the teacher about the meaning of

English words they did not know. The result of the questionnaire showed that most of the students always bravely ask the teacher when there is material that they do not understand. Meanwhile for the statement for students made the vocabularies list to be memorized can be seen from the questionnaire result that most of the students always make vocabularies list to memorize English vocabularies.

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