

Research Article

Elementary Teachers' Perception of Language Skills: Student Skills and Learning Strategy

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Abstract.

Language skills are an important aspect in the development of education in elementary schools because this ability influences students' academic achievement and social abilities. Language skills that elementary school students must master include listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Therefore, teachers must understand the extent of language skills each elementary school student possesses. This research aims to explore teachers' perceptions of the language skills possessed by students in elementary schools, as well as the challenges faced in the teaching process. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection through interviews. Participants in this research were 15 elementary school teachers in West Bandung. The research results show that the majority of teachers have a positive perception of the importance of language skills in students. However, teachers also expressed challenges in implementing effective learning strategies, such as limited time, lack of appropriate teaching materials, and differences in language abilities among students. This study suggests the need for ongoing training for teachers and the development of teaching materials that better suit students' needs. In conclusion, teachers' perceptions of language skills are very important in determining learning success, but further support is still needed in terms of resources and learning methods.

Keywords: teacher perception, language skills, learning strategy

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1. INTRODUCTION

The life of humans today cannot be separated from language. Language in human life serves as a tool to convey messages or as a means of communication to express ideas, concepts, messages, and information, which can be shared verbally or in writing (1). Language is an essential asset for individuals. Without proper language, a person cannot communicate their ideas, concepts, and thoughts to others. Good language also enables the speaker to convey what they want to communicate so that the listener can understand and comprehend.

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Language proficiency is a fundamental skill that plays a vital role in human life. Language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for expression, identity, and social interaction. In this era of rapid globalization and digitalization, language skills, both in one's native language and foreign languages, have become increasingly important. Language proficiency enables individuals to understand and convey ideas effectively, build intercultural relationships, and access broader career and educational opportunities. By recognizing the importance of language skills, individuals can not only communicate more effectively but also adapt to the changes in an increasingly connected world.

The significance of the Indonesian language in education lies in its aim to develop the ability to use Indonesian in all its functions: as a means of communication, a tool for thinking, a symbol of unity, and a medium of culture (2). Indonesian language instruction is directed toward improving students' abilities to communicate effectively and accurately in Indonesian, covering four skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (2)

Language proficiency, especially in learning the Indonesian language, is essential for students starting from elementary school. Language skills are crucial for elementary students as they play a significant role in supporting academic, social, and cognitive development. In Indonesian language learning, students are expected to develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills that foster critical and creative thinking. This is important so that students can comprehend and respond to lesson content well, while also building literacy skills as a foundation for further knowledge (3). Additionally, language skills strengthen critical thinking by helping students analyze information, solve problems, and adapt to various social situations. Language also serves as an essential tool for students to understand culture and social norms, which enhances their social skills, allowing them to communicate more effectively in broader contexts (4)

In reality, the language proficiency of elementary school students remains relatively low. This is based on the results of PISA 2022, which indicate that, although Indonesia's ranking improved in several categories, its average scores for reading, mathematics, and science decreased compared to 2018. Globally, PISA 2022 scores declined for many countries, and Indonesia was also affected. Indonesia's reading literacy score dropped to 359 points (from 371 in 2018), the math score fell to 366 (from 379), and the science score declined to 387 (from 396) (5). Another study (6) identified various challenges in Indonesian language learning at the elementary level, such as a lack of reading

interest and limited skills in understanding complex texts. For example, elementary students often struggle with comprehending reading material and face difficulties in understanding Indonesian texts, especially those students who use a regional language as their mother tongue at home.

According to (7), factors contributing to the low language proficiency at the elementary school level include low self-confidence, difficulties in speaking and writing skills, and the impact of online learning during the pandemic. Research shows that elementary students often feel embarrassed or hesitant to express their opinions, hindering the development of their speaking skills. Furthermore, many students make writing errors, such as in spelling, word choice, and sentence structure. Contributing factors to these errors include limited language mastery, infrequent writing practice, and insufficient time allocated for such activities (8). Additionally, the teaching methods and students' active engagement in the learning process also affect these language skill deficits. Research in elementary schools indicates that less varied methods and a lack of reading activities outside the classroom can worsen the situation (9).

Based on the issues above, the low proficiency in the Indonesian language among elementary school students reflects the need for improvements in the educational system and teaching methods to enhance students' literacy skills (10). Overall, the issue of low language skills among elementary students requires a comprehensive approach in language teaching methods, including the integration of practical activities such as role-playing and group discussions to enhance communication skills and language comprehension at the foundational level (11).

Perception is a process that begins with the use of the senses to receive stimuli, which are then organized and interpreted, resulting in an understanding of what is sensed (12). The importance of the teacher's role in developing students' language abilities is a key factor in students' language proficiency. Thus, teachers' perceptions not only influence their choice of teaching strategies but also shape expectations that can impact students' motivation and success in language learning (13).

Based on the above background, the objectives of this research are to determine: 1) Teachers' knowledge of the four language skills, 2) The importance of the four language skills, 3) Challenges in teaching language skills, and 4) Strategies for teaching language skills to elementary school students.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative phenomenological approach. This research examines elementary school teachers' perceptions of students' language abilities, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, problem factors, and teaching strategies. Participants in the research were 15 elementary school teachers (10 women and 5 men) from 13 state schools in West Bandung Regency, 1 school in Bandung City, and 1 school in Cimahi, Indonesia. In selecting participants, researchers chose randomly. However, there are criteria for selecting teachers to become resource persons with at least five years of teaching experience.

Then the interview activity aims to obtain information about the four language skills of elementary school students. The interview question instrument consists of 12 open questions given to participants and has been validated by expert experts. The topics in the interview contained four main components: 1) the teacher's perception of the language skills, 2) the importance of the four language skills, 3) learning problems in language skills, and 4) strategies for teaching language skills to elementary school students. Data from interviews were analyzed and presented in table form to be grouped based on the four components measured. Analysis of interview data is explained using the Miles dan Huberman model. The technique goes through four stages of data analysis: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study define data that explains teachers' perceptions of students' abilities in language skills. The teacher's perceptions are classified into elementary school students' abilities regarding listening, speaking, reading, writing, learning problems, and learning strategies in learning Indonesian. The results of interviews and data analysis related to teachers' perceptions of students' language abilities show that teachers' perceptions of language abilities, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, still need to be improved. This can be seen from the explanation the teacher gave, which is still general. Interview data shows that teachers have not been able to explain language skills accurately and how to teach them (Table 1). Teachers cannot determine students' language skills in each component with achievement indicators based on predetermined criteria. Even though teachers very commonly know the term language

ability from various training activities and workshops, teachers need help to understand the definition, criteria, and indicators.

TABLE 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Language Abilities

Listening ability	Verification mark
Prepare to listen.	Not all teachers have an understanding that matches the indicators of listening ability
Understanding of the material read.	
Ability to recognize the main ideas of the material being read.	
Ability to answer questions related to the material read.	
Speaking ability	Some teachers have an understanding that corresponds to indicators of speaking ability
Ability to speak fluently.	
Ability to make inaccurate word choices.	
Ability to be communicative when speaking.	Some teachers have an understanding that follows reading ability indicators.
Reading Ability	
Accuracy in pronouncing readings correctly with appropriate intonation.	
Ability to answer questions about the content of the text read correctly.	Some teachers have an understanding that corresponds to indicators of writing ability.
Writing Ability	
Ability to determine ideas in writing.	
Ability to use choice vocabulary.	
Ability to use spelling.	

3.1. The Importance of Language Abilities

Table 2 discusses the findings of data analysis and reduction of elementary school teachers' perceptions of language skills. The answers from the interviews conducted in the second point confirmed that the majority of teachers stated that language skills in elementary school students were critical to master, especially understanding the abilities in each component, namely listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills, which were very important to master because of their benefits. to develop students' intellectual, social, and character abilities. Therefore, learning must be gradual in each basic skill students need at each grade level.

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that the teacher already understands the importance of language skills. Overall, language acquisition occurs in stages, from understanding the sounds and meanings of words to understanding complex grammar

TABLE 2: Teachers’ Perceptions about The Importance of Language Skills.

The importance of language skills	Verification mark
Basic language skills for cognitive development	Most teachers realize the importance of mastering language skills for students.
Help in the process of thinking, communicating, and understanding	
will find it easy to absorb information, understand instructions, and explain ideas more clearly.	
Have a foundation in learning more complex languages	
Easily collaborate, exchange ideas, and develop	
Build critical thinking and analytical skills	

and formal language skills. This discussion, the teacher was asked to explain learning problems in language skills for the third topic. The teacher’s answers show that some teachers can understand problems in language skills, causal factors, and solutions. The results of analysis and data reduction can be seen in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Teachers’ Perceptions of Language Abilities.

Problems of learning language skills	Verification mark
Difficulty in expressing oneself verbally.	Teachers know language skills problems.
Low reading comprehension.	
Difficulty writing with a clear structure.	
Unclear pronunciation or pronunciation.	
Lack of effective listening skills.	
Social and psychological obstacles.	

The results of the teacher’s answers show the factors causing language skills problems are caused by knowledge, education, experience, environment and facilities, habits, and age. In this fourth issue, teachers are expected to be able to explain appropriate learning models to improve language skills in elementary schools, especially in the classes they teach. The results can be seen in Table 4.

The explanation above shows language skills can be implemented and achieved through direct practice-based learning activities, habituation, cooperative learning, and collaboration with parents to improve language skills.

3.2. Discussion

Language skills for elementary school students are the basis for developing themselves in communicating in society, so students are required to master various skills which

TABLE 4: Teacher Perceptions Regarding The Application of Language Skills in Elementary Schools.

How to teach language skills	Verification mark
Using short presentation and role play methods.	
I give songs to improve listening skills.	
Using interactive images in writing activities.	Some teachers understand that teaching language skills requires familiarization and parental cooperation.
We are carrying out the mandatory activity of writing short stories every holiday.	
I get students used to using Indonesian while at school.	
Involve parents in book-reading activities at home.	

include listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills(14). This is also a key aspect of education to strengthen 21st-century skills in learning competencies (15).

However, the results of this study indicate that teachers still need to understand the concept of language skills at each age and grade level in elementary schools. Referring to this problem, in-depth knowledge is still needed for teachers in the form of socialization related to language skills. In addition, language skills training is very much needed to improve language skills for elementary school teachers. Workshop activities, seminars, and language education conferences are important for teachers in strengthening their understanding of language skills that must be mastered by elementary school students at each age and grade level. If the quality of teacher understanding has been maximized in achieving the goals of language skills for students, then students will easily have perfect language skills to express their ideas and ideas creatively and critically(16).

Language skills are important things that students must achieve in each component in building the ability to build a foundation in communication, literacy, and understanding visual and verbal signs, and finally, they can develop intellectual and social abilities. Therefore, learning language skills does not only emphasize the theoretical aspect but also how students can use language as its function, namely as a tool for communication (17).

Various opinions say the importance of teaching language skills to students and it has to be prepared well to meet the achievement of students' language skills goals in each component based on the age and needs of the students. Based on the results of the study, it is necessary to have an initial understanding that teaching language skills, no longer emphasizes understanding theory alone but rather through more specific activities such as practice, the use of interesting teaching media, and using creative and

productive learning methods (18). Creative and productive learning methods are learning by increasing positive attitudes and several effective strategies (19,24) adapting materials based on age, characteristics, and learning objectives (20). Some learning models that emphasize practice include role-playing (21), storytelling (22,25), dan collaborative learning (23).

Some research results also say that some teachers know that teaching language skills can use learning modes such as contextual learning, project-based learning, and direct practice-based learning. However, a deep understanding of various models and strategies has not been implemented properly in teaching language skills. Teachers need to know the achievements in each aspect of language skills at each age and grade level, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand teachers' perceptions of students' language skills in elementary schools and the teaching strategies used in the learning process. Some language skills difficulties include listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. The underlying factors for these difficulties are the lack of teachers' knowledge about the importance of the four language skills, issues in language teaching, and the teaching strategies used. Teachers' understanding of language skills in elementary schools still needs improvement, and more effective teaching strategies are necessary. This can be achieved through workshops, seminars, and training. Some teachers recognize the importance of a contextual approach with project-based and practical learning methods.

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