

## ALPHA GENERATION IN ELT: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT** The alpha generation is the youngest generation attend the school years nowadays. As the literate technology generation they rely more on technological devices. Their behaviours are actually affected by the technological development and the educational sector has to adapt it. This study intends to find out the teachers' perspectives in ELT towards the Alpha generation. It applied a qualitative case study approach that involved three English Teachers from three different schools in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. In gaining the data, those participants were interviewed and its results were descriptively analyzed through four steps, namely selecting relevant data, transcribing, interpreting and reporting. The result shows that teachers are ready enough to teach the Alpha Generation related to English learning. There are some difficulties faced by teachers in the teaching process regarding the students' behaviours differences as the result of generation characteristics. Even it is difficult, the teachers are ready and have already equipped with the ability to face changing in teaching process, included the generation switching. Through this current study are the findings implied that teachers give more attention towards the students' characteristics in teaching process to help students achieve the development of language skills.

**Keywords:** Alpha Generation, ELT, Teachers' Perspective, Generation Switching

### A. INTRODUCTION

The importance of English stimulates all levels of education to learn English. In junior high school in Indonesia, English has been taught as a compulsory subject. Students need to study the language in the classroom two or three times a week. For this reason, teachers need to prepare the teaching materials, teaching techniques and teaching methods to help students achieve the language skills.

Today, high school students are comprised the X and A generation. As they are familiar with technology, learning facilitated by technology is increasingly expanded. The teachers' role in the classroom mostly become facilitator and consultant to help students attain knowledge (Silva, 2014). But the study of (Tafonao et al., 2020) revealed the opposite. Teachers found to get difficulty in teaching the current generations. Problem they faced is mostly related to educators who do not use technology media optimally because some reasons: First, using technology-based media is viewed as problematic; Second, using advanced media is wasteful; Third, educational technological media are still not readily available in classrooms; Fourth, there is still a lack of technological media proficiency among educators; Fifth, used to taking pleasure in lectures: Sixth, inadequate praise from superiors.

The similar thing mentioned by Sahelatua et al., (2018) there are several problems felt by teachers such as inability to use computers, use Power Point as a learning tool, and effectively use the internet are just a few of the challenges that educators or teachers confront when using technological media. Based on the data from Information and Communication Technology Center or *Pusat Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi (Pustekkom)*, Ministry of Education and Culture stated that the current teachers available in school found that are only 40% of them are ready with technology while the rest 60% are not (Rahmatiah, Hani Ayu, 2019). This is actually the thing that should be uncovered since the present students are from the literate technology generation.

The technological developments affected various existing areas, such as social interactions between individuals and communities (Fadlurrohimi et al., 2020). This also affected the educational sectors, including ELT. Students are more individualized since technology is in their hands. They can learn English by using technology such as English application, artificial intelligence, social media and others. They rely on the technology while teachers face difficulty in adapting the fast technological changing. Today the technology is one of the basic needs to support the learning process. Educators must be ready and adapt to face the technology literate students. But a study revealed that educators had not been technologists or had sufficient technological background, so it was not surprising that educators had the same grievances in dealing with and teaching the literate technology generation (Tafonao et al., 2020).

By the explanation above, it is important for the researchers to find facts in the field regarding the opinion of teachers when facing the literate generation, especially the Alpha generation in ELT. Do they really get difficulty in applying the technology or they face other troubles in teaching the latest generation existed.

## **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Years passed, new society born, change happen, realized or not, this is currently taking part in the environment all over the world. Some of the fascinating to describe today is the fast information related to generation switching in society as the result of the advanced technology. Strauss and Howe mention in their book which title *Generation: The History of America's Future*, that generation change happens every 20 years. This happens today. Before the 1946, baby born are categorized as pre-baby boomers, while society exists after 1946 until 1969 are mentioned as baby boomer generation. After those generations, born people which is known as X generation, they were born between 1965-1976. The newborn baby between 1977 until 1997 are given name as the Y generation, and they are also well known as the millennial generation.

After them, generation mentioned as the Z generation, born between 1998-2010. And the youngest generation exist today is the Alpha generation, people who were born between 2010-2025.

“Digital natives” is the definition given by the expert to the Alpha generation. That is because they are the first generation to actually coexist with advanced technology since they were born (Reis, 2018). Digital natives are people with high skill, knowledge and ability related to technology. This is the mainstay that distinguishes them from the previous generations (Bennett, S., Maton, K., & Kervin, 2008). Besides, as the digital native, the Alpha generation also mentioned as individuals with high tendency toward creativity, leadership and dynamism. Those characteristics will be mostly pointed them to the leadership and technology-related professions. They are most interested in becoming bloggers, youtubers, and digital influencers.

The prediction related to the Alpha generation is spread. Schawbel (2014) projected this generation has more challenges and opportunities because they have more intelligence technology and rely on social media heavily, which will influence their way of doing job and daily activity. They will be more pampered and influenced by their parents who are Generation X and Y. They can full fill their needs on its own, more educated, and more ready to face greater challenges. By understanding the characteristics and behaviours of this generation will help to predict how they will behave and act as the future society (Reis, 2018).

In the educational sector, the oldest of Alpha generation is currently joining junior high school environment. Educators might face challenges since Alpha generation is technology literate, more individualized and pretty different from the earlier generations. To avoid gap between teachers and students, the world of education has big challenged to map the unique profiles of learners and design learning patterns according to their needs (Purnomo et al., 2016).

The researcher itself found that the Alpha generation is creative but less polite if they are seen through the previous generation perspectives. They have a tendency to show their true feelings with no hesitation towards others' condition. They might think that what they are doing is right, but based on the Indonesian culture which positioning the politeness as an important thing, the Alpha generation sometimes did something out of the boundaries.

### **C. METHOD**

This current study is a part of a wide range study which is intended to explore Indonesian English high school teachers perceptions' towards the Alpha Generation in ELT. To answer the research question, a qualitative case study approach is employed. This approach is expected to be able to gain an intensive and holistic description as well as in-depth analysis

about Alpha Generation in ELT Indonesian English teachers' perspectives. Stratified random sampling was applied to decide the subject of the research. There were three junior high school English teachers from three different schools in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. They were interviewed through an online Platform Zoom Meeting and the results were descriptively analyzed through four steps; namely selecting, transcribing, interpreting and reporting. The limitation of this study was only three respondents available, and the interviewed teachers were only from Y generation. They were chosen because they are familiar with technology and to be predicted to dominated the education sector the several next years.

## **D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

There were three English teachers interviewed in this research. They were asked related to their perceptions on the Alpha Generation in ELT. There are some main points questioned in interview such as things they know about the Alpha generation, the characteristics of the students, the difficulty they faced, skills needed by teachers in facing the literate technology students, etc. The result of the interview is described as follows:

#### ***Teacher 1***

The 1<sup>st</sup> teacher stated that he knew a little information about the Alpha generation and realized that his students in the seventh grade are mostly categorized as the Alpha generation. Overall, he did not get any difficulty in teaching the students and believed other teachers also experienced the same. That was because all teachers were graduated from educational schools which means they are capable in teaching and have at least basic skills of teaching such as teaching methods and understand the students' characteristics. Those skills are helping in conducting effective learning process in the classroom. But he believed study related to the current generation are still needed.

In teaching process, the teacher took advantage of students' smartphones. He involved the social media and English learning application in giving materials and assessments. Based on his experienced, the students got excited and became more active in the class. On the other hand, he noticed that not all teachers could get advantage of the social media or the technological devices. Some of them were struggled with the technologies. He did not blame anyone, he just believed that some teachers might good with technology while others were good on other things.

The teacher understood that the current students mastered technology better than teachers. He stated that this kind of condition sometimes gave two side effects. The first one was students became more independent learner to maximize the opportunity to grow. The second one was

the students might face personal characteristic problems. He said that the students currently became more individualized. They counted on their own selves and only cared about their own problems. This may contribute to personal characteristic difficulty in the future.

The teacher then mentioned that the current students need teachers who could understand their position as the technology literate generation. Teachers who could give them knowledge and guide them to maximize their potential in the technology era. Students also needed to be more educated related to the technology. Due to they master it and their lives mostly related to it, students need to learn about digital literacy. This would help them much in the future.

### ***Teacher 2***

The 2<sup>nd</sup> teacher knew that the current students she faced are students from the Alpha and Z generation. She stated that currently teachers were required to act as facilitators. Teachers who had attended teacher training were equipped with the latest teaching methods, strategies, etc., and those helped them carry out their role as facilitators in the classroom. She said she tried to apply what she have learned. She adopted students' daily activities into the learning process. Sometimes she gave them assignments to create English video content or to watch English learning videos on TikTok, YouTube, etc. Based on her observation, students liked and loved to do activities related to social medias. When she taught by using technological devices, such as smartphones, the students felt happy and had better attention than without using technology.

The teacher noticed that most of her students liked to perform. She thought this might one characteristic of the Alpha generation. But she said her students from previous generation (Z Generation) also like to perform. They might have similarities. They liked to make videos and upload it to TikTok, YouTube, etc. She also mentioned that her students were really different from people in her age. When she and her friends were in that age, they didn't have social media and it was the big difference between the generations. By the difference, the teacher suggested all teachers to learn more about the Alpha generation because they were new in the educational sector, moreover they just entering junior high school. Teachers still need to learn about them.

She mentioned even though she did not get any difficulty in teaching her current students she still needed time to understand the characteristics of the generation. She sometimes compared students' attitude with the things of her generation. That was because she did not realize that students differ from one generation to others. This thing she said still needed to adapt more.

The teacher said students currently became more individually as the result of smartphones and technology development. Students had everything on their hand. It was actually good to train students not to rely on other people or they might use the technology in the wrong way.

So that students needed to learn about digital literacy to help them control observed information, and avoid the smartphone addicted.

She noticed alpha generation students need to learn about manners. How to socialize in a good manner in society. How to mingle with peers, not just only focus on their smart phone. They should know how to enjoy playing with peers like what we did when we were young.

### ***Teacher 3***

The 3<sup>rd</sup> teacher also understand the meaning of the Alpha generation. She said she did the same thing to all her students. She utilized technological devices and multimedia in learning process. The process of teaching by using technological devices sometimes not run very well because of the lack of facility. She had prepared the Power Point presentation well, but when the teaching time came, the facility (such as projector) used by other teacher. She said teaching students by using multimedia such as powerpoint presentations, videos, etc., helped to attract students' attention. But when she did not get adiqute facility she utilized students smartphones to teach by told them access the English learning applications. Even in the learning process the smartphones destructed students focus and attention.

The teacher mentioned that current students had different characteristics. Sometimes she compare them with her generation even it was not apple to apple because. she just wondered the current generation was pretty different from the previous generations. But from them she learn that teachers had to teach students based on the current situation, current generation era, not based on what teachers did when they were in students' age. For example, nowadays, students count much on technology, this made her had to adapt to it into the learning process.

She noticed that the students currently raised with a phone in their hand. They communicated by using technology and social media more than talked to people in the real life. They absorbed many things with no filter. When students see something, they just took it as the truth even if it was wrong in the real life society. She realized why sometimes she found children with no manners when having communication towards older people. Children nowadays when saw something viral in social media they just directly follow the same even it was not good, disgusting, or did not have any benefit for their future. They did it because of their friends in social media did the same and they felt happy for it.

For that reason she believed that current students needed teachers who could use the technology and understand them as the new generation, which totally different from the previous generations. It was duty of teachers to be qualified in this area. Mastering technology and understand the position of our students which was not easy to do. She also mentioned that students need to learn how to use the technology to achieve in the learning process. They could

use the technology to become artist, content creator or to do their hobbies. They needed the literacy, technology literacy so they did not use the technology for searching for unimportant things or not good thing.

### **Discussion**

After conducting the interview of three English teachers, the researchers concluded that teachers realized the current students they teach, categorized as Alpha Generation, differ from the previous generations. Because of the characteristic differences, the teachers applied technology in the learning process and try to adapt to the students' learning behaviour, which is the count on technology. They did this because teachers believe that technology can catch students' attention in the learning process better than without using technology. This was in line with the study of Tafonao et al., (2020) that technology media helps students to have better perception towards learning materials, gets involve in the learning process, behaves positively in learning. Media and technology are also mentioned as basic needs in supporting the learning process of the latest generation. Those are all because they grew up in the technology era. Fadlurrohim mentioned that the development of technology affects the way of individuals and communities in conducting social interactions (Fadlurrohim et al., 2020).

The oldest alpha generation currently entering adolescence life period. Adolescence is synonymous with the age of self-discovery (Makaria et al., 2021). The most significant factor for the exploration of self-identity is the social environment. The sensitive period of adolescence starts from the age of 12 to 21 years. Alpha generation adolescence general characteristics are technology literate, social and multitasking. Santosa (2015) describes that alpha generation is ambitious to success, acts instantly, respects freedom and has high self-confidence, loves to get appreciation and digital and information technology. Being optimistic and positive about accomplishing their dreams are some of the positive personal characters owns by the Alpha generation. They prioritize working and making money.

Teachers mentioned they needed more information related to Alpha generation to help them teach better. They believed a further study related to this generation would help them understand better, so they could develop learning activities which are suitable for students. This was in line with the study of Junior et al. and Correa. It is necessary to have a strategic view focusing on the younger generation to maximize their potential in the future (Junior, et.al. 2016). Tafonao et al., (2020) which mentioned that the alpha generation is more individualized as the effect of technology and gadget familiarization. It makes difficult for teachers to attract students' attention in the learning process. It is important to find out the characteristic profiles of this

newest generation and then use it to design learning patterns based on their need, so that there is no gap between teachers and students anymore (Purnomo et al., 2016).

Teachers admitted the technology in the teaching-learning as advanced media. This is in line with the study of Correa (2015) mentioned that teachers need to utilise technology in developing good learning activities from different tools to acquire information. By understanding the alpha generation characteristic will help to project what kind of information will be suitable to be developed to maximize the learning process and to prepare students for joining the future society (Reis, 2018).

Teachers mentioned their students loved to show their language ability on social media platforms. This characteristic is then used by teachers as a tool in the teaching-learning process to improve students' ability in language skills. This is in line with the study of Reis (2018). Based on the study, students of Alpha generation are creative, dynamic, they career future will be mostly related to leadership profession and technology related-professions such as digital influencers, bloggers and youtubers. That is why they like to perform, show their ability and upload it to social media. Applying the social media as tools in the learning process will not only make students' attention better but also will train them to perform better and prepare them to have the skills in leadership and related-technology professions in the future.

Even the interviewed teachers were good enough in using technology in the learning process, they mentioned that not all teachers were ready to use the technology in the learning process. They really did not want to blame anyone related to the technology disability, they just highlighted some teachers needed more extra effort to adapt with technology in the educational system. Based on the survey of Information and Communication Technology Center or Pusat Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi (Pustekkom) mentioned in the research conducted by Hani Ayu Rahmatiah and Nur Asiyah, Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture declared that there are about 60% of Indonesian teachers are not ready-to-use technology in learning process, while only 40% of them are technology literate enough and ready to utilise the technology (Rahmatiah & Asiyah, 2019). It is in line with the study of Sahaletua that teachers' problems to exploit technological media because they are unable to operate computer, powerpoint, and internet properly (Sahaletua, 2018). The same thing stated by Tafonao et al., (2020) that teachers faced some difficulties in using technology media in the learning process for various reasons, namely the technology media sometimes bothering and wasting, lack of instructional technology media availability, insufficient ability in technology mastery, already enjoying the lecturers, no appreciation from superiors.



Teachers believed that the technology brings positive and negative effects towards the students' development. The positive effects were the students become more independent and able to develop their self better because they have sources of information in their hand. The negative effects are related to the students' behaviours towards older people and society. Teachers mentioned it might because students rarely had interaction with the real world, they spend times mostly in front of their gadget. These activities make them lose the essence of interaction and politeness issues based on the society and culture around them. These were inline with the study of Abdul Khaliq Ramadhani that the influence of technology causes two sides effect toward the generation. First is they face the opportunity to grow fast while they might have personal character problems Abdul Khaliq Ramadhani (2017). It is prominent for educators to take part in understanding the technology literate because they need to be led and educated to have better characters. This may not be easy to do if teachers do not have good boundaries and never experience technology visual literacy. Having those will help to accept students well according to the way they are.

Teachers mentioned they sometimes compared kids in this era and kids in their era. They did not believe students sometimes being impolite towards the elderly such as passed in front of teachers without permission, focused on outfit, judged people, etc., which were impolite behaviour from the perspective of local culture. Barkowitz (2016) characterized the alpha generation as the agile one, they override privacy and sometimes breaks away from any restriction because they ignore the rules. They are innovative and focus to live in the present time, bury the past and have no idea about the future. They prefer a healthy lifestyle. Liked the same things to be enjoyed over and over again and they continue to thrive. The characteristic of the alpha generation sometimes seems as impolite and unimportant thing to do from by the elderly society.

Teachers mentioned skill that should be mastered by the alpha generation is technology literacy. Digital literacy is the ability to use social media effectively and efficiently to communicate and interact socially. It is a technical and cognitive concept that everyone should have in the social media era (Daneels, R., & Vanwynsberghe, 2017).

Digital literacy is the skill to comprehend and use information accessed through digital devices (Nasrullah, 2017). This kind of literacy is very important since media technology has dominated the used data and sources by human in their daily life (Kurnia & Astuti, 2017). While UNESCO (2011) described digital literacy as a life skill which related to ICT skills, civic skills, learning to learn skills, and taking part in long life learning. Those involve the ability to socialize,

learning skills, attitudes, critical and creative thinking, and inspiring people in the digital competence.

Digital literacy refers to the ability to take advantage of digital media, communication devices, internet network and others, appropriately. They use the communication devices, internet network precisely according to their needs (Suhardi, 2021). Alpha generation is typically has a very close relationship with technological devices and internet connections because of high access intensity. Internet and technology have already become an essential element for this latest generation (Rusnali, 2021).

Alpha generation as the society who relies on social media much should have the digital literacy. Alpha generation personalities compared to previous generation, they have a more advanced way of thinking and are more exposed to new things (Rusnali, 2021). As the part of society who will take over the place of productive human and run the world in the next twenty years, the alpha generation needs digital literacy to provide supplies so they can stay on tracked in today's digital era.

Using of technology in the learning process will be increasingly expanded. The teacher's role in the classroom is more to facilitate students and place to consult when students face difficulty (SILVA, 2017). That is why teachers should master the technology in the learning process.

There is an essential need in the education field today, high quality of teachers. Professional and high dedication teachers are important to deal with those problems (Tafonao et al., 2020). The alpha generation students require high quality and professional educators, which can deal with media technology mastery. The need for higher quality teachers today must be responded positively by stake holders (Oviyanti, 2016).

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Based on the description and those above findings and discussion, the researchers of this presented study consider that teachers have the prior knowledge related to Alpha Generation. They use technology in the teaching-learning process, such as social media, English learning apps and some others. Even they know something related to the generation, teachers need time to adjust the characteristics of students and they need more study related to the generation to provide the skills needed by the latest generation. Overall, teachers are equipped with adequate teaching-learning skills and they are ready to face the generation shift.

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