

An Analysis of the Influences of *Kumon* Learning Method Toward the Learning of English as A Foreign Language

Maya Anisa Farani¹, Santi Farmasari², Muh. Isnaini³

^{1,2,3} English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram, Indonesia.

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Corresponding Author

Author Name: Maya Anisa Farani

Email: mayaanisa19@gmail.com

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Abstract: Seeing the fact that English began to be used as an international language and children began to learn it, Kumon Learning Institute began to develop English lessons called EFL (English as a Foreign Language). However, the different influence of Kumon Learning Method toward the learning of English as a Foreign Language to the existing students and new students remain questionable. The purpose of the study is to identify and describe the different influence of Kumon Learning Method toward the learning of English as a Foreign Language between the existing students and new students. The researcher used descriptive qualitative approach to support this research. The population of this research is English as a Foreign Language students in Kumon Sweta which consist of 29 students, and all of them were taken as samples. In this research, data was collected by observation and interview. The data was analyzed using the theory from Miles and Huberman (2014), started from data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verifying. The research showed that there are differences in the influence of Kumon learning method toward the learning of English as a foreign language to the existing and new students. The differences include language skills, study habits, confidence, independence, and progress and skill development. Additionally, both existing and new students can experience boredom because of various factors such as different preferences and learning styles, so it cannot be classified at certain times. The implication of this research is the need for an approach between teachers and students to be able to determine learning programs that are appropriate to students' abilities and learning styles, so as not to have a negative impact on the learning process.

Keywords: Kumon Learning Method, English as a Foreign Language, and influence

INTRODUCTION

English is known as one of the most used languages in this world. Almost all writings on the internet are in English. One thing that has been recognized by the world today is that English is an international language. According to Samudro and Amin (2022, p. 168), in this era of globalization, being proficient in English is essential. Children needs to have the ability to read and write in English well so that they can read reading materials in English quickly. Melani et al. (2021, p. 65) highlighted that the vocabulary required for reading comprehension is an important aspect. The more vocabulary learners know, the more likely they are to understand the text they read. However, according to Amin (2014, p. 31), most of foreign language learners only learn English at school or college and it is not enough for them to learn and practice their knowledge.

Seeing the fact that English began to be used as an international language and children began to learn it, Kumon Learning Institute began to develop English lessons called EFL (English as a Foreign Language) that specially designed for students from countries whose mother tongue is not English, such as Indonesia.

As revealed by Azalia (2017), the impact of Kumon Method affects education in Indonesia, such as practicing independence in learning, concentration, and train children to have life skills. Whereas, Nathanya (2018) showed the different results, where Kumon Method has negative influences on students, such as feeling bored because of frequent repetition and questions that were less challenging. This negative impact then causes problems not only on the student's academic performance, but also affect and disturb those around the students. However, the different influence of Kumon Learning Method toward the learning of English as a Foreign Language to the existing students and new students remain questionable. Does the negative influences such as

boredom only affect the existing students or even affect new students. As well as whether only students who have used Kumon Learning Method for some periods of learning will definitely develop independence and concentration in learning is still unknown.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative descriptive method. Sukmadinata (2016, p. 73) revealed that qualitative descriptive research aims at describing and illustrating existing phenomena, both natural and human-made, which pay more attention to characteristics, quality, interrelationships between activities. This research was conducted at Kumon Sweta Mataram, involving English as a Foreign Language students which consists of 29 students. According to Arikunto (2017, p. 173), if the number of samples are less than 100, then all of them should be taken. Therefore, this research used total sampling where all the members of the population were used as samples (Sugiyono, 2019). The sample was divided into 2 groups, namely 18 existing students, and 11 new students. The data were collected using observation and interview. Observation conducted was about how students learn in class. Started from looking at the student's focus, the speed and how independent they are when they work on the worksheet, and also observed students' record books to their study habits and development of students' language skills. Whereas, interview was conducted to ask about what influences they felt after learning using Kumon Method, and conducted structured interview with Kumon Sweta Instructor to find out the influence of the Kumon Method on students and the differences in its influence on existing students and new students. This research used data analysis method according to Miles and Huberman (2014, p. 14), those are; data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing/verifying.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study were reviewed in two steps, namely findings and discussion. In the first step, the researcher presents a summary of the data obtained and then in the second step, the results will be explained narratively.

Finding

The different influence of Kumon Learning Method toward the learning of English as a Foreign Language to the existing students and new students

According to the instructor, the different influences of Kumon Learning Method between the existing students and new students are learning independence, basic learning attitudes, and work dexterity and concentration that is formed when working on worksheets. However, related to boredom, both existing students and new students can experience boredom when using the Kumon method. Thus, it cannot be said that boredom is only experienced by one of them. The effect of boredom to the existing students usually occurs due to a lack of guidance from the instructor when students had already found difficult materials and the material being studied is far above the grade level. For new students, boredom will come when the students work on the material monotonously or too easy and the instructor doesn't make the right study plan.

Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted to the students, there are several differences in the influence of the Kumon method felt by them. The results can be displayed as follows:

Table 1. Kumon Method Influence on Students

Influences							
Existing Students	Language Skills	Study Habits			Confidence	Independence	Learning Speed
		C	TM	F			
Ever	18	15	15	17	10	18	14
Never	0	3	3	1	8	0	4
Percentage	100%	83%	83%	94%	55%	100%	77%
New Students	Language Skills	Study Habits			Confidence	Independence	Learning Speed
		C	TM	F			
Ever	11	6	6	7	7	9	9
Never	0	5	5	4	4	2	2
Percentage	100%	54%	54%	63%	63%	81%	81%

The results shows that all participants of both groups experienced an influence on their language skills. The second most influence felt by existing students is independence, where the results are the same as Language Skills. All students who are included in existing students feel independent in their learning. Whereas, for new students, the second most influence felt was Independence which had the same results as Learning Speed, where 9 out of 11 or as many as 81% of students felt it. For existing students, learning speed is in the sixth position with the result 77% of students. This result is lower than new students where as many as 81% of them have felt the influence on their learning speed.

The third most influence felt by existing students was focus, where as many as 94% of them were able to ignore distractions around them. This is inversely proportional to new students, where only 63% of students felt it. The ability to manage time and consistency of existing students is at 83%, higher than new students which is only 53%. The influence on the self-confidence of new students is higher than existing students, where new students get 63% results, while existing students only get 55%.

Table 2. Placement Test and Achievement Test Results Comparison

Existing Students	Placement Test				Last Achievement Test		
	Test Level	Score	Remark	Predicate	Level	Score	Predicate
IGAR	PII	72	7A	D	C	100	A
RA	PII	72	4A	D	A	97	A
JS	K	62	7A	D	2A	100	A
AD	PII	80	4A	C	C	100	A
EMM	PII	84	4A	B	C	100	A
KKH	PII	80	4A	C	A	97	A
IAPP	K	75	7A	C	2A	100	A
WAU	PI	48	4A	D	C	96	A
IPY	PII	84	4A	B	C	100	A
KJ	PII	40	7A	D	2A	96	A
GA	PII	76	4A	C	C	100	A
GG	PI	76	A	C	E	99	A
CN	K	75	7A	C	3A	100	A
PSA	PI	60	4A	D	C	98	A
NRP	PII	75	7A	C	A	100	A
IAV	PI	84	A	B	E	91	B
FEJ	PI	76	A	C	E	94	A
NAA	PII	88	4A	B	B	96	A

New Students	Placement Test				Achievement Test		
	Test Level	Score	Remark	Predicate	Level	Skor	Predicate
NO	PII	80	4A	C	2A	100	A
NOG	PII	84	4A	B	2A	96	A
IKC	PII	68	7A	D	5A	100	A
GAS	PII	40	7A	D	4A	100	A
BAA	K	62	7A	D	4A	96	A
NEH	PII	88	4A	B	2A	92	B
SM	PI	80	A	C	A	96	A
KI	PII	60	7A	D	7A	100	A
IGNB	K	94	4A	A	4A	100	A
MGM	PII	72	4A	C	4A	100	A
AKD	K	87	7A	B	7A	100	A

- K = Kindergarden A (Excellent) = 93 - 100
- PII = Primary 1-3 B (Very Good) = 84 - 92
- PI = Primary 4-6 C (Good) = 75 - 83
- D (Low) = <75

Based on the results of placement test they took at the beginning before using Kumon Method and the results of achievement test they took after using Kumon Method for some period of learning, language skills of both existing and new students are improving. These language skills include the ability to listen, write, speak, and read.

In addition, there are some negative influences such as boredom felt by students. Based on the results of the interviews with participants, the following was the result of the question:

Table 3. Student Boredom

The Feeling of Boredom	Respondents	
	Existing Students	New Students
Ever	6	2
Never	12	9
Percentage	30%	18%

Based on the results of interviews, existing students who have ever felt bored were 30% or 6 out of 18 people. The number is higher than new students, which is only 18% or 2 out of 11 students ever felt bored. The feeling of boredom caused by various factors, such as frequent repetition and exercises that are too easy for them.

Discussions

Different Influences to Existing Students and New Students

• Familiarity with the Kumon Method

Existing students are already familiar with the Kumon Method and the structure of the program. This can be seen from how they respond to the program given by the instructor. They often protest to the instructor if they receive repetition of material. It happens because they have been through the initial adaptation phase and have a good understanding of the method. This is in accordance with the previous research conducted by

Indah (2023, p. 38) which stated that Kumon students need around a minimum of a year to get used to be self-learning and understand the systems. In contrast, new students are just starting to use the Kumon method and are in the process of familiarizing themselves with the method.

- **Independence and Self-Directed Learning**

The existing students are more responsible for their learning and become more independent in their study habits. They have self-correction and self-evaluation abilities, so they are able to review their work and identify their own mistakes. Existing students also developed the ability to manage their time effectively. This is what causes the existing students to excel in terms of critical thinking and become more independent than new students. This is in line with the research conducted by Sintawati (2016, p. 428) which revealed that Kumon students work on their own questions by paying attention to the questions in the worksheet so that it can train students' independence and self-confidence.

New students are in the early stages of developing these skills and may require more guidance and support from instructors as they learn to be independent learners. However, some of new students already have an independent attitude in learning. This can be seen when they are able to write the time without having to be reminded and listening to the CD without the need to be accompanied by the instructor

- **Confidence and Motivation**

Existing students who have experienced progress and success through the Kumon program have higher levels of confidence and motivation in their academic abilities. This is because they have seen the positive impact of their work, which can enhance their overall confidence in learning. In Addition, Kumon students work on worksheets based on a gradual level of difficulty, starting with material they can work on easily to more difficult material. This is what then creates self-confidence in existing students because they feel that "they can". As mentioned by Kusworo (2012, p. 30), if students are able to exceed their grade level, then they will feel that the lesson is easy and self-confidence will emerge within them. Suningsih (2018, p. 17) in her research revealed that Kumon Method given at the right level will develop students' abilities and self-confidence. Students start at a comfortable level also allowing them to build confidence, concentration and pace before progressing on to higher level work (Kumon ORG, 2023).

However, new students are also felt the influence of confidence. In contrast to existing students who feel confident because they can work on problems easily, the confidence of New Students is formed because they are still at an easy level. So, they feel that 'they can' and think that learning English is easy and not as difficult as they think.

- **Language Skills**

Existing Kumon students have more knowledge compared to new students who have not yet completed any Kumon exercises. Based on the interview conducted, the existing students who have already been studying English already have the understanding of grammar rules, vocabulary, and sentence structures, leading to better fluency and accuracy in their communication skills.

In addition, most of the Kumon students are those who started at an early age and have never had English lessons

before. So, they really start from the initial level. Meanwhile, with the Kumon method, students only study for approximately 30 minutes a day with material in stages. This is what causes students take a long time to gain more material. This is also supported by the theory from PT. KIE Indonesia, (2020, p. 31) which highlighted that if students study continuously, it takes them 6 months to 1 year to achieve material that is equivalent to their grade level. Therefore, existing students who have studied for more than 6 months will have more knowledge than new students.

- **Study Habits**

Based on the observation to the existing students, here are some study habits that are generally created after they apply learning with the Kumon Method; consistency, time management, and focus

1. **Consistency**

The Consistency in students can be seen from how they do their Kumon homework at home. Existing students tend to have time to do their homework every day and schedule their study for approximately 30 minutes each day. This can be seen from the time they do their homework, which is done at the same time almost every day.

In contrast to new students, they tend to do all of their homework in one day and take more than an hour. Whereas, study approximately 30 minutes a day but continuously aims to maximizing the children's learning and helping them develop their good study habits. This is in line with Jost's law (in Sudirji, 2015) which highlighted that studying for 30 minutes a day for 6 days is better and more productive than 6 hours non-stop in 1 day.

2. **Time Management**

New students still don't have the ability to manage time. This can be seen in how they do their homework. Some of the new students often do not do their homework, or do all of their homework in one day. They tend to spend their time playing so they often forget to do their homework. Existing students already have good time management skills, where they are able to schedule when they can play and when they have to do their homework. They do this to prevent delays and ensure that they have enough time to complete their homework.

3. **Focus**

The existing students and some of the new students are encouraged to eliminate distractions while studying. Eliminate distractions and study in a quiet environment can help students focus on their work and improves their concentration. The focus on existing students can be seen from how they do their worksheets. Existing students tend to be more focused and ignore distractions around them. This can also be seen from the working time, students who are focused can work on their worksheets quickly. This is in line with the previous research conducted by Usmani et al. (2020, p. 2) which highlighted that Kumon method can improve students' ability to focus more in doing something. In contrast, new students often lose focus while working. They often look back, talk to other students while studying, and often daydream. This can be seen from the time they work which tends to take a long time.

- **Progress and Skill Development**

Existing Kumon students are able to progress faster through the program, as they have already mastered some of the concepts taught in the earlier levels. They may have reached higher levels of proficiency, with a solid foundation in the subjects. New students, on the other hand, are starting at

their current skill level and gradually working their way up, building their knowledge and skills over time.

- **Long-Term Commitment**

Existing students have demonstrated a longer-term commitment to the Kumon program by continuing their studies over an extended period. They have experienced the benefits of consistency and perseverance in their learning journey. New students are embarking on their Kumon journey and still exploring their commitment level and the long-term impact the program will have on their academic development.

Different Influences to Existing Students and New Students Familiarity with the Kumon Method

- **Lack of Challenge and Progress**

Some students find that the learning materials or teaching methods used in the Kumon Method are not engaging or interesting, boring, and too easy to students, they may lose interest and become bored. It can happen because they started learning at a lower level, so instead of being fun, they felt learning using Kumon method was boring.

- **Lack of Variety**

Students become bored with the lack of variety in their learning experiences. They were just asked to follow the existing stages, starting from reading the passages from their own homework to practice students speaking and pronunciation, then continuing with listening to audio to practice students listening and pronunciation, then students do study on worksheets based on their level by reading the instructions and examples. This is a monotonous situation because they have to do it every day without any variation in the learning process.

- **Learning Style Mismatch**

At Kumon, students do not learn by being taught, but they have to work on worksheets according to their own abilities. It may not be suitable for all students, as everyone has different learning styles and preferences. If a student's learning style does not align with the Kumon Method, they may struggle to stay engaged and motivated.

Based on the results of the interviews, it is important to note that every student has different preferences and learning styles, so the possibility of boredom for each student will also be different based on individual learning styles, interests, experiences and cannot be classified at certain times.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on data obtained from the interview and observation of students, the researcher concluded that there are differences in the influence of Kumon learning method toward the learning of English as a foreign language to the existing and new students. The differences include language skills, study habits, confidence, independence, and progress and skill development.

Overall, while there are different influences between existing students and new students after using the Kumon Method, both groups benefit from the solid foundation in language skills, study habits, and the confidence, and independence that the Kumon Method can provide.

In addition, both existing and new students can experience boredom because of various factors such as

repetition, material that is too easy or difficult, lack of challenge, lack of variety, lack of progress, and learning style mismatch. Each student has different preferences and learning styles, so the possibility of boredom for each student will also be different based on each student's learning style, interests, experiences and cannot be classified at certain times.

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