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The Importance of English Subjects at the Primary Level: Stakeholders' Perceptions

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Abstract

This study investigates how stakeholders perceived the inclusion of English subjects as part of local content in primary schools. A qualitative method employing a descriptive approach was used to conduct the research. Data were collected through interviews and questionnaires. Participants involved in this study included primary school teachers, a vice principal for curriculum affairs, English teachers, and primary school students. The research focused on three primary schools—located in Depok, Bogor, and Sukabumi—to explore stakeholders' perspectives. The results reveal a positive consensus among stakeholders regarding the significance of English education in primary schools for enhancing students' foundational vocabulary. Nevertheless, stakeholders expressed concerns about the designation of English as a local content subject in these schools. The study highlights the vital roles each stakeholder plays in improving the quality of English teaching and students' language skills. Despite challenges in teaching and learning English, educators and students have implemented strategies for improvement, including participation in teacher associations, engaging in English tutoring, watching English media, and listening to English songs. Based on these findings, the study emphasizes the urgency of integrating English subjects into the school curriculum to support students' skills. This study, which focuses on private primary schools, calls for future investigations into the implementation of English subjects in public primary schools.

Keywords: Educational stakeholders, English subject, Indonesian curriculum, primary school, young learners.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of the English language at the primary school level relates to students in the golden age of learning new skills, including language acquisition. Numerous scholars and scientists emphasize the critical period for children to learn languages, encompassing first and second language acquisition. Brain flexibility and psychomotor considerations enable children to acquire native-like pronunciation due to speech-muscle development from birth until around age five. After puberty, these abilities decline significantly, making native-like fluency in a second language much harder to achieve (Brown, 1994; Ipek, 2009; Krashen et al., 1979; Ozfidan & Burlbaw, 2019). In essence, children's brains are more adaptable than adults for language learning. However, other studies argue that certain language abilities can still be acquired after the critical period, though more challenging. These studies suggest that some language skills are easier to learn during specific developmental stages (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Furthermore, the growing awareness of English as the world's lingua franca has increased its integration into the educational system. Globalization necessitates that education supports students in learning English at school. Over 144 countries have introduced English as a foreign language at the primary level, often as a preferred subject (Enever & Moon, 2009; Nikolov, 2009). Given these considerations, English is increasingly emphasized at the primary level in Indonesia. However, Indonesian education faces challenges regarding English's designation as a non-compulsory local content or elective subject, a status that has been debated for decades.

The study by Lestari (2003) highlights government policies in the Ministerial Decree of the Department of Education and Culture No. 060/U/1993, which categorizes English as a local content subject in primary school. Subsequently, the 2006 KTSP (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pelajaran*/School-Based Curriculum) made English an elective subject, allowing schools to decide whether to include it. Under the 2013 K-13 (*Kurikulum 2013* or 2013 Curriculum), English was classified as an extracurricular subject (Husna et al., 2022; Sepyanda, 2017). In the *Kurikulum Merdeka* or Independent Curriculum, English remains an elective subject, contingent on available and supportive resources (The Agency for Standard, Curriculum, and Assessment in Education of Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

This policy variability has led to disparities in educational equity, with significant differences in lesson content and inadequate learning facilities across schools (Kurniati et al., 2021). The findings indicate inequalities among schools and insufficient resources for students. Schools with the resources to offer English instruction gain an advantage, creating system inequalities. Even where English is taught, textbook quality often varies, as no government standard exists. The main challenge for educators is that the curriculum's designation of English as the local content subject does not adequately support the development of teaching and learning in primary schools.

In addition, the demand for English in elementary schools has risen due to increasing recognition of its importance in a globalized era among parents and educational institutions. English has become a key factor for parents selecting schools, with many institutions offering English programs to attract students. Schools now host engaging events and programs promoting English learning, and some kindergartens have even incorporated English into their curricula.

Despite research focusing on English at the primary level—often from teachers' and parents' perspectives, particularly regarding teacher readiness and competence—there is a lack of understanding about the perceptions and efforts of key stakeholders: teachers, students, and parents. Based on these considerations, this study aims to address two research questions:

1. What is the perceived importance of English instruction in primary schools among English teachers, students, and parents?
2. What efforts are teachers, parents, and students making to facilitate English learning inside and outside of school?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Young Learners

Teaching English to young learners has gained significant attention and popularity due to the prevalent belief that the optimal phase for fostering English language skills is during the golden age—a period when children possess remarkable learning aptitudes. During this developmental stage, children's minds are highly adaptable, facilitating the acquisition of various skills, including languages. Additionally, their open-mindedness towards different languages and cultures enhances their language learning capabilities (Sukarno, 2008).

Scholarly opinions diverge on the definition of young learners. Ellis (2014) identifies them as children aged between five and eleven. In contrast, Ersöz (2007) classifies them into three subgroups: very young learners (3-6 years old), young learners (approximately 7-9 years old), and older/late young learners (around 10-12 years old). This categorization indicates that kindergarten and primary school students are encompassed within the category of young learners, presenting an ideal opportunity to initiate the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language.

Slattery and Willis (2001) elaborate that English education has permeated early educational settings, such as kindergartens and primary schools, globally. This approach aligns with the innate curiosity and eagerness to learn that children are born with—qualities that should be nurtured when they enter formal education (Cameron, 2001). Pinter (2011) highlights the advantage of introducing foreign language learning to children, as it enhances their foundational communication skills in that language. This proficiency should be cultivated as early as possible. Numerous researchers have discussed and endorsed the integration of English education within Indonesian kindergartens, encompassing aspects such as instructional methods, learning materials, and classroom development (Astutik & Aulina, 2018; Jazuly & Indrayani, 2018; Putri & Listyani, 2020; Sulistiyani & Fitri, 2020; Yunita & Hati, 2016). Consequently, some kindergartens incorporate English as a foreign language alongside the native language, Bahasa Indonesia, based on the belief that early exposure to a foreign language offers distinct advantages (Septiyana, 2013).

2.2 Teaching English to Young Learners

Many countries have decided to introduce English at the primary level due to the firm belief that young children learn languages better and more easily than adults (Brewster et al., 2002). Furthermore, there is increasing awareness of the importance of English as an international language. Mastering English is considered necessary in this era of globalization since it serves as a lingua franca used worldwide. English is the most frequently spoken language globally (Ilyosovna, 2020; Nishanthi, 2018). Learning English as a foreign language has long-term effects, providing secondary students with modest advantages in reading, writing, and listening skills (Kubaneck-German, 1998). Consequently, English to Young Learner (EYL) programs have increased in popularity (Enever & Moon, 2009; Gimenez, 2009). Additionally, parents prioritize English as the first children to study (Garton et al., 2011).

In Indonesia, the education system is still preoccupied with discussions about the importance of English in primary schools, as it is not considered a compulsory subject. English was formally introduced as a local content subject in 1995 for the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of primary schools (Madya et al., 2004). Since then, many Indonesian schools have offered various programs and events that could help students learn English effectively (Tuhumury, 2016). However, inequality persists between schools teaching English and those not offering adequate English education.

Despite numerous curriculum changes over seventy years of independence, including 1947, 1964, 1968, 1973, 1975, 1984, 1994, 1997, 2004, 2006, and 2013 curricula, the emergency curriculum (developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic) and the current *Merdeka* Curriculum (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018), English remains a local content subject and not a mandatory subject at the primary level. English has been designated as an elective subject since the 2006 KTSP curriculum. During the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013), it was relegated to

extracurricular subjects (Husna et al., 2022; Sepyanda, 2017). Under the *Merdeka* Curriculum, English remains an elective subject (The Agency for Standard, Curriculum, and Assessment in Education of Republic of Indonesia, 2024), with its inclusion depending on the school's eligibility, including teacher availability and adequate resources (Zein, 2012).

The omission of English instruction in primary schools could potentially enhance the acquisition of students' first language (L1) and local language proficiency before they are exposed to new languages. Villanueva (2016) explains that a learner's proficiency in a foreign language can be influenced by the role of their L1, either as a facilitator that aids in comprehending language similarities (positive transfer) or as a source of interference when the two languages differ (negative transfer).

The Indonesian government has undertaken various initiatives to enhance the English skills of both educators and learners through a series of curriculum revisions. However, these rapid and short-lived changes have been criticized for failing to improve English proficiency in society (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018). The transformations include shifting from a content-based to a competency-based approach, transitioning from teacher-centered to student-centered methods, and moving from centralized to decentralized systems. These rapid shifts pose challenges, requiring stakeholders to adopt new approaches swiftly (Exley, 2004; Ilma & Pratama, 2015; Poedjiastutie et al., 2018). Consequently, due to frequent and rapid changes in the educational system, the effectiveness of the process and outcomes is limited. Though implemented with good intentions, changes in the curriculum do not guarantee the achievement of their intended goals due to various factors encompassing programs, processes, and human involvement. Therefore, Poedjiastutie et al. (2018) recommend that every curriculum shift necessitates a comprehensive Need Analysis (NA) involving teachers and students, along with evaluations of the previous curriculum.

Several prior studies align with the current research, including those by Erwiana (2020), Kurniati et al. (2021), and Husna et al. (2022). Their qualitative descriptive studies examine stakeholders' perceptions regarding the significance and challenges of English education in primary schools, even in cases where English is not obligatory in the national primary curriculum. These studies utilize questionnaires, observations, documentation, and interviews for data collection. Husna et al. (2022) find that stakeholders support teaching English in primary schools due to the advantages of learning languages during the students' golden age. Erwiana (2020) highlights the need to improve teaching methods and assessment strategies. Kurniati et al. (2021) identify challenges for teachers, such as a lack of quality textbooks, while noting that students exhibit interest in learning English outside the classroom but struggle with pronunciation and self-confidence.

Considering the research problem and previous investigations, this study explores stakeholders' perceptions of the English subject at the primary level, involving teachers, parents, students, and schools. The anticipated insights from this research are expected to hold significance for various stakeholders, including the government, schools, teachers, parents, and students, underscoring the importance of English education at the primary level.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The researchers employed a descriptive qualitative approach to illustrate, observe, and delineate the attributes of individuals, groups, situations, and natural phenomena. This method involves documenting various facets of a given situation (Dulock, 1993). The objective of utilizing the descriptive qualitative method in this study was to investigate a concern within Indonesia's educational system, specifically the absence of mandatory English instruction at the primary level. Consequently, the research sought to comprehend the significance of having English lessons in primary schools, as perceived by the key stakeholders in education–English

teachers, students, and parents. Additionally, the study documented the endeavors undertaken by teachers, parents, and students to facilitate English language learning.

3.2 Participants

The participants who responded to the research inquiries were drawn from three private primary schools with English subjects in their curriculum: H School in Depok, P School in Sukabumi, and T School in Bogor. These schools share similarities as private institutions offering English instruction, with students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. However, they differ in curricula, employing either the Merdeka curriculum or the 2013 Curriculum, and in English instruction regulations.

The participants were categorized into three groups: students, teachers, and parents. While all three schools were included, parent participants were only sourced from one school. The other two schools declined to share parent contact information.

Table 1. Participants in the research.

Participants	School H in Depok	School P in Sukabumi	School T in Bogor
Teachers	2 (Interview)	2 (Interview)	2 (Interview)
Students	29 (Questionnaires) 3 (Interview)	3 (Interview)	3 (Interview)
Parents	17 (Questionnaires) 3 (Interview)	3 (Interview)	3 (Interview)

Additionally, an interview was conducted with one vice principal of curriculum affairs to validate issues regarding the importance and challenges of English as a subject in primary schools.

Table 2. Questions for the vice principal's interview.

No	Questions for interview
1	What is your opinion on the government's decision to eliminate English lessons in elementary schools and only consider it a local content subject?
2	What can we do as teachers to support the development of students' English skills?
3	What can schools do to support the development of students' English skills?
4	Do you think English lessons are important for elementary school students?

3.3 Technique of Data Collection

The research instruments included tools such as questionnaires and interviews to assess and gather information for the study (Zedeck, 2014). This study employs both questionnaires and interviews to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data. Data validation in qualitative research evaluates the findings' accuracy from the perspective of the researcher, participants, or readers (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The researchers used questionnaire responses, audio recordings, and interview transcripts to validate the data.

Table 3. Questions for the parents' interview.

No	Questions for interview
1	Why do you think it is important for elementary school students to learn English at school?
2	What difficulties does your child face while learning English?
3	What do you do to support the development of your child's English skills? (For example, enrolling in private lessons, reading books, watching content in English, etc.)
4	What are your hopes for English learning in schools that can support your child's English abilities?

A mixed and closed-ended questionnaire was used to gauge stakeholders' perceptions of the importance of English learning for primary school students. This questionnaire was validated by two experts. Mixed questionnaires include close-ended questions with predetermined response categories, followed by open-ended questions allowing participants to elaborate (Bécue-Bertaut et al., 2010; Zohrabi, 2013). The questionnaire was distributed to students and parents at the three

private schools and parents at three private schools. It was written in Bahasa Indonesia to minimize misunderstandings. The researcher also interviewed the selected participants, including students, teachers, parents, and the vice principal of academic affairs at “H” school. These interviews aimed to explore efforts by the schools, parents, and students to improve English teaching and learning. Audio recordings and transcripts were utilized to deepen and strengthen the interpretation of the findings (Kvale, 1996).

Table 3. Questions for the Questionnaire.

No	Questions
1	Do you attend English classes at school?
2	How do you feel about attending English classes?
3	Do you think learning English is important?
4	What difficulties do you encounter while learning English?
5	What do you expect from the English teacher who teaches you in class?
6	Are you afraid to speak English?
7	Why do you feel afraid or not afraid to speak English?
8	Why do you think learning English is important?
9	What do you do to improve your English skills?

3.4 Technique of Data Analysis

This study followed the data analysis steps outlined by Creswell (2012), which involve preparing and organizing the data, exploring and coding the database, describing findings and forming themes, representing and reporting findings, interpreting the meaning of the qualitative findings, and validating the accuracy of the findings.

The researchers prepared and organized the data scanning, arranged questionnaire data, and transcribed interviews. The data were then coded and categorized based on the information collected. A description—an in-depth representation of details about individuals, locations, or activities within a context (Creswell, 2009)—was developed to form themes and topics addressing the research objectives.

Next, the narrative description and themes were presented to convey the findings. Interpreting the data aimed to relate the results to theory, previous studies, and findings. Finally, validation ensured the accuracy of the findings. Qualitative reliability was achieved through consistent methods, while qualitative validity involved specific techniques to verify the findings' accuracy (Gibbs, 2007). Triangulation was employed to coherently justify themes by aligning the research findings with theoretical frameworks.

4. RESULTS

The results of this research highlight stakeholders' perceptions regarding the importance of English subjects in primary schools and the efforts made by teachers, parents, and students to support English learning. Based on the objectives and data analysis, the findings are organized into discussions about the importance of English subjects at primary schools, stakeholders' opinions on an elective subject, and stakeholders' efforts to support students' English language skills.

4.1 The Importance of English Subjects at the Primary Level

The increasing awareness among parents and students regarding mastering English has encouraged its inclusion in the educational process. According to the questionnaire data, 35 students (100%) from School H in Depok, school P in Sukabumi, and School T in Bogor agreed on the importance of learning English in primary school. Similarly, all 17 parents (100%) strongly agreed that learning English is essential for their children.

The interview data further support these findings. Both parents and teachers emphasized the necessity of English education for young learners.

- (1) “Learning English in primary school is required to know basic vocabulary so our children won’t be left behind by their peers who probably have learned it earlier. Although children could learn it independently, they need guidance from the teacher to ensure the language they learn is appropriate”. (Parent 1, School H)
- (2) “Children are in the golden age, so they shouldn’t miss the chance to learn it in primary school. Not all students have access to learn English in a private institution, so it would be better if the government facilitates it to be taught and learned at school”. (Teacher 1, School T)

Students from the three schools also expressed positive views on learning English, citing its role as an international language and its benefits for future opportunities.

- (3) “Learning English is important as an international language, and it will provide better job opportunities in the future”. (Student 3, School H)
- (4) “It’s important to learn English as it’s an international language. Many people speak English, so we need to master it to communicate with them, especially foreigners”. (Student 1, School T)

The viewpoints expressed by the vice principal, teachers, parents, and students underscore the significance of introducing English education at the primary level. During their formative years, children possess a heightened ability to grasp new concepts, including language skills. Introducing English at an early stage builds a strong foundation for vocabulary and basic expressions, which become invaluable as students advance to a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the language in secondary education. While independent learning through videos or books is possible, instruction from qualified teachers ensures the quality and accuracy of language acquisition.

4.2 Stakeholders’ Opinion on English Subject Position in Primary Schools

The research findings reveal stakeholders’, teachers’, parents’, and schools’ dissatisfaction with English being designated as a local content subject or an elective subject, resulting in some students missing out on the opportunity to study English. Interviews captured these sentiments:

- (5) “It’s unfortunate that some students don’t have the chance to study English from primary school. As a parent, I want the best for my child, including schools with good facilities, programs, activities, and English subjects to support their life skills”. (Parent 1, School H)
- (6) “Having English language skills, after acquiring L1 or the local language, is necessary for the 21st century to support our life, regardless if it’s in the curriculum or not. However, it’s unfortunate that English depends on school policies, meaning not all elementary school students in Indonesia have the same opportunity to learn English”. (Teacher 1, School P)
- (7) “It’s regretful that English is an elective subject, but perhaps the government probably aims to focus on students’ literacy skills in their first language. Literacy is not simply about reading the text but also comprehending its meaning, which can enhance their ability to learn a new language once they have mastered their first language fluently”. (The Vice Principal of Academic Affairs, School H)

In summary, stakeholders believed that English should be integrated into the primary school curriculum to equip students with the skills to meet 21st-century challenges. English proficiency is essential for academic success, social interaction, and future career opportunities.

4.3 The Challenge of Learning and Teaching English in Primary Schools

The research findings reveal several challenges stakeholders, including schools, teachers, parents, and students, faced in teaching and learning English in primary schools. The mixed questionnaire results regarding students’ opinions on their fears about learning English show that

21 students (approximately 60%) expressed no fear. In comparison, 14 students (around 40%) admitted feeling afraid of learning and speaking English. Their concerns stemmed from various factors, such as limited vocabulary mastery, difficulty understanding word meaning and texts, grammar challenges, incorrect pronunciation, spelling and writing mechanisms, and psychological barriers like the fear of being ridiculed by peers.

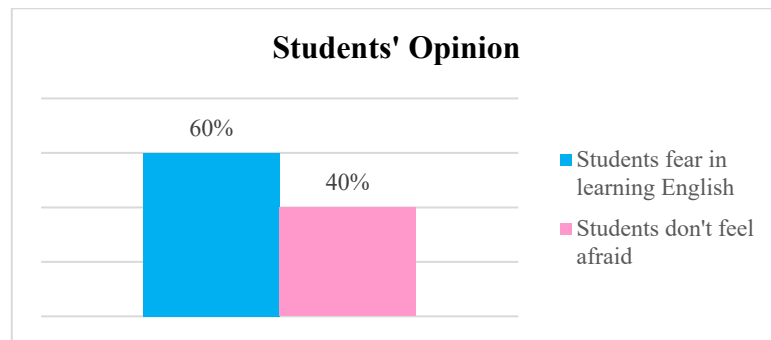


Figure 1. Students' opinions.

Government decisions regarding English teaching and learning in elementary schools also affected the process. These decisions lead to regulations, objectives, book sources, and syllabi variations among schools.

Table 4. Different regulations and programs on the primary level regarding the practice of English language learning.

School H	School T	School P
- Merdeka Curriculum - Native English class program held once a semester as an English extracurricular program. - First and second-graders learn English with their homeroom teacher, while third to sixth-graders learn English with their English teachers.	2013 Curriculum - Collaborated with private institutions. - A private teacher teaches English.	2013 Curriculum - Have an extra paid program that collaborates with an online English language learning program, and the teachers are U. S.-certified teachers. - First and second grade are taught by English teachers, and third and fourth grade are taught by homeroom teachers.

Additionally, some schools required homeroom teachers who were not graduates of English programs to teach English subjects, which presented difficulties, as one teacher points out.

- (8) "I find it difficult to teach students because I am not an English graduate, so I keep learning more and design the class activities as best and as interesting as possible. There were a few moments when I taught, and my students corrected my word choices and pronunciation, but that's okay because we learn together". (Teacher 1, School P)

The vice principal of academic affairs at school "H" provided insight into this situation, as presented in Excerpt (9).

- (9) "The possible reason homeroom teachers are the English teachers in primary school is that they have more time to communicate with children than the English teacher, who only attends class a few times". (The Vice Principal of Academic Affairs, School H)

In summary, all stakeholders faced challenges in teaching and learning English in primary schools. Despite these difficulties, the importance of teaching English at this level cannot be denied. Parents, schools, and teachers need to collaborate and provide mutual support to enhance the learning process, enabling children to succeed in learning English.

4.4 Stakeholders' Support for English Subjects in Primary Schools

The research findings demonstrate that all stakeholders contributed to optimizing and enhancing the teaching and learning of English. The questionnaire shows that parents adopted

different strategies to support their children's English learning, including enrolling them in private English courses (about 65%, or 11 parents), providing English content such as books, songs, and movies at home (about 23%, or four parents), and communicating with their children in English (about 12%, or two parents). Some parents combined these approaches by providing English exposure at home alongside facilitating English tutoring. However, not all parents could communicate in English, which limited some students' exposure to English at home.

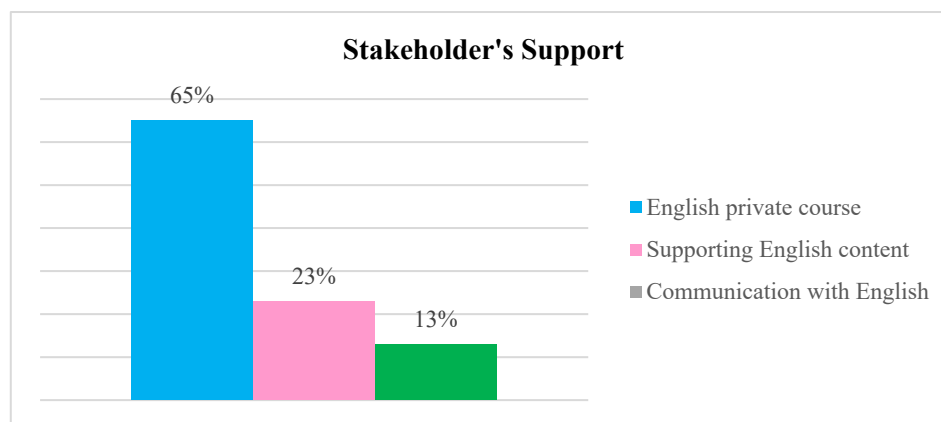


Figure 2. Stakeholder support results.

Interview data further highlight the efforts of parents and teachers to support English learning and student's strategies for improving their English skills:

- (10) "I enroll my children in English tutoring to make it easier for them to understand the lessons at school and improve their English skills". (Parent 1, School H)
- (11) "I have a KKG (Kelompok Kerja Guru/Teacher Workgroups) to discuss students' needs, learning media, and methods that are interesting and effective". (Teacher 1, School P)
- (12) "I love to listen to English songs and watch variety shows. Sometimes I play games with my friends from abroad". (Student 1, School P)

In conclusion, stakeholders made a concerted effort to support the improvement of students' English skills. Schools collaborated with credible external institutions to enhance English language learning programs. Teachers enriched their knowledge by participating in teacher associations, workshops, and seminars. Parents assisted their children by facilitating private courses and providing study support at home. Students also actively enriched their English learning experiences by listening to English songs, watching English-language content, playing games, reading books, and joining English clubs or tutoring programs.

5. DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that all stakeholders held a positive view of the importance of teaching English to primary school students. Stakeholders realized that the earlier children begin learning a new language, the better the outcomes. In this case, English was introduced at the primary school level. The demands of economic globalization highlight English as a critical skill for employees in the workforce to meet international economic pressures. Parents' enthusiasm, support, and demand for their children to learn English early have social and financial benefits, with many enrolling their children in private courses to help them master the language fluently.

Stakeholders' perspectives align with researchers' beliefs that learning English at an early age yields better results (Hakiki & Hidayati, 2017; Hu, 2007; Latifa, 2020; Nunan, 2003; Wati, 2016), as children in the 'golden age' (3-13 years) are more receptive to learn new skills, including

languages. The global phenomenon of teaching English to young learners is driven by both educational and economic globalization (Sulistiyo et al., 2019). English has become a vital skill in the 21st century, serving as a lingua franca for international communication (Enever & Moon, 2009; Garton et al., 2011; Gimenez, 2009; Hu, 2007).

Parents hope that early English education will give their children social and financial advantages (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004; Enever & Moon, 2009; Gimenez, 2009). Many believed mastering English would open up better opportunities, including employment prospects and social benefits. Nowadays, many parents understand how crucial it is for children to master English since it can help them in their future careers (Butler & Le, 2018; Wagner et al., 2016). In Indonesia, this enthusiasm is evident as parents increasingly support English education at the primary level, envisioning a promising future for their children. This support includes enrolling children in additional English lessons beyond the school curriculum (Cameron, 2003; Hawanti, 2014; Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018; Sulistiyo et al., 2019; Widodo, 2016; Zein, 2012).

Even though the issue of English as a school subject in Indonesia since 1994, it is still debatable in terms of its position as the local content and elective subject in the primary school curriculum (Hawanti, 2014; Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018; Widodo, 2016; Zein, 2012). English is often designated as a local content or elective subject, which reflects Indonesia's efforts to preserve local languages. Studies suggest that the dominance of Indonesian as the national language and the increasing prominence of English have contributed to the decline of local language use (Alwi, 2001; Rosidi, 2001, 2004; Zein, 2012). Schools have the autonomy to decide whether to include English in their curricula without a nationally mandated curriculum. Consequently, primary school teachers must design, perform, and assess their curriculum, classroom policy, learning instructions, learning objectives, and assessments based on their students' and schools' needs (Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018; Sulistiyo et al., 2019; Widodo, 2016).

Under the *Merdeka* curriculum, English remains an elective subject. The government has taken steps to structure its inclusion, providing guidelines such as syllabi and learning objectives, as outlined in Regulation No. 008/H/KR/2022, about Learning Outcomes in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education Level, and Secondary Education Level in the *Merdeka* Curriculum. However, inequality persists between schools due to the availability of appropriate learning resources such as textbooks, syllabi, and teaching materials to provide students with meaningful learning experiences and the teaching material development that must consider the student's needs and characteristics (Lengkanawati et al., 2015; Sulistiyo et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology allows the district government to grant schools and English teachers the autonomy to develop their English curriculum, materials, and assessments (Sulistiyo et al., 2019). This autonomy benefits private and bilingual schools, which often have better-qualified English teachers and resources, enabling them to provide superior learning experiences compared to public schools (Zein, 2012). This disparity creates gaps between prestigious state schools, as parents are aware of the value of high-quality curricula, educators, programs, activities, and a positive learning environment in fostering their children's abilities, interests, intelligence, and character, including English learning.

The findings also reveal that many primary school English teachers lacked proper qualifications. Most are not graduates of English education programs and have not been specifically trained to teach English to young learners (Yuwono & Harbon, 2010). This lack of methodological competence and proficiency affects their ability to serve as effective language models (Suyanto, 2010). While some schools have implemented teacher workgroups (KKG) to discuss English teaching methods, media, and strategies, more support is needed.

The government and schools should consider implementing English education in primary schools, as it provides children with opportunities to construct meaning in the language they aim to master (Cameron, 2003). Research suggests that the optimal age for learning English is between 3 and 10 years, as younger learners are more likely than adults to acquire native-like proficiency (Mayr & Siddika, 2018). English departments in higher education institutions should also prepare student teachers to teach English to young learners, as this skill is increasingly important (Sulistiyo et al., 2019; Yuwono & Harbon, 2010). Additionally, early childhood education programs should incorporate training in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). Primary

school English education can serve as a competitive advantage and a foundation for further studies.

6. CONCLUSION

The research findings and discussions underscore unanimous agreement among stakeholders on the importance of English education for young learners, even though it is formally introduced at the primary school level. This recognition is rooted in the notion that early exposure to English aids children in mastering fundamental vocabulary and expressions during their formative years.

The challenges teachers, schools, and students face in teaching and learning English are distinct. Schools are called upon to establish supportive programs to enhance student learning outcomes. Teachers must devise engaging and efficacious instructional approaches, and they also need to extend their guidance beyond the classroom, as education is not confined to school premises. Simultaneously, students are encouraged to actively expand their knowledge and experiences to enhance their English language proficiency.

Nevertheless, the discourse surrounding English education at the primary level could be further investigated due to the limitation of the school as the participant in this research. This suggestion is prompted by the fact that English education now commences even earlier, sometimes at the kindergarten stage, in non-English speaking nations. Additionally, the research's focus on English education in private primary schools warrants future exploration of policies and practices related to teaching and learning English, both as a local content subject and an elective, within public schools in Indonesia.

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