

Urgency of Teaching English to Young Learners in *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar*

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Abstract: The research aims to analyze perceptions about the importance of English for Young Learners at Elementary Schools at *Gugus Diponogoro* in Jembrana Regency in '*Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar*'. The research objective was to find out teachers' perceptions about the importance of English for young learners at Elementary Schools in Jembrana Regency. The sample of the research was 16 teachers from 12 Elementary Schools in *Gugus Diponogoro*. The samples were taken through cluster random sampling. The researcher used descriptive qualitative and the data were collected by using questionnaire. The results of the research were 1) The students are able to master English when teaching English since earlier, 2) English will be useful in gaining a job in the future, and 3) By mastering English, the young learners will have the social and economic benefits in the future. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teachers of Elementary Schools in *Gugus Diponogoro* agreed that English for Young Learners is crucial to teach.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis persepsi tentang pentingnya Bahasa Inggris bagi pembelajar muda di sekolah dasar gugus Diponogoro Kabupaten Jembrana dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. Tujuan Penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui persepsi guru tentang pentingnya Bahasa Inggris untuk pembelajar muda. Sampel penelitian ini adalah 16 guru dari 12 sekolah dasar di Gugus Diponogoro. Sampel diambil melalui cluster random sampling. Peneliti menggunakan deskriptif kualitatif dan pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan kuesioner. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah 1) para siswa mampu menguasai Bahasa Inggris ketika Bahasa Inggris diajarkan sejak awal, 2) Bahasa Inggris akan berguna dalam mendapatkan pekerjaan di masa depan, 3) Dengan menguasai Bahasa Inggris, para pelajar muda akan memiliki jiwa sosial dan manfaat ekonomi di masa depan. Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulkan bahwa para guru sekolah dasar pada Gugus Diponogoro setuju bahwa Bahasa Inggris untuk pembelajar muda sangat penting untuk diajarkan.



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INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Government has changed 2013 curriculum to the newest curriculum named *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar*. In this curriculum focuses at material essential, character development and the students' competence. *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar* can be used at all level such elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, vocational school, and college. At elementary school, it is found some changes such English subject. In 2013 Curriculum, English is as local content in elementary school but now English is as compulsory subject. However, this case can be considered by the school with adjusting the circumstances and interests. In elementary school, English learning gives a chance to the students to open insight which related to themselves, social relationships, culture and job opportunities available globally.

English is one of dominant language which used globally in education aspect, bussiness, trading, science, hospitality, international relationship, health and technology. Learning English can give a chance to the students for communicating to others from different background (Arikan, 2015). The students have wide opportunity to make an interaction using various text. The students will gain knowledge and various skills which is required to be able to live in a diverse world culture. Learning English offers ability to get an access about the world and different point of view. Students' understanding of this socio-cultural and intercultural knowledge can improve critical thinking skill. In this new curriculum, English learning is focused on strengthening the ability to use six language skills, such as: listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting in various text. The learning achievement refers to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). CEFR reflects specifications that can be seen from the ability of students: (1) maintain interaction and convey something desired in a variety of contexts with clear articulation, (2) express the main ideas to be conveyed comprehensively, (3) maintain

communication even though sometimes still gaps.

In elementary school, English learning is expected to be able to assist the students in achieving their communication skill as life skill. In this new curriculum, English learning has some objectives, such as: (1) developing communicative competence in English, namely, oral, written, visual, and audio-visual. (2) developing intercultural competence to understand and appreciate the perspectives, and products of Indonesian and foreign cultures. (3) developing the confidence to express themselves as an independent and responsible individual. (4) developing critical and creative reasoning skills (Artini, 2017).

Based on the result of observation done in *Gugus Diponogoro* in Jembrana, it was found that English teaching for elementary school which was less innovative. English teaching is still dominated by memorization and less on comprehension or ability for communication. In terms materials, it focuses mostly on vocabulary, grammar dan certain short text. The exercise is also matching and multiple choice which is lack of activity to guide the students understanding content of text. In other hand, the learning process must be interspersed with the context of language use naturally which the students could learn to understand the meaning in context. In addition, the material must also involve feelings of pleasure, enthusiasm, imagination, critical and creative thinking of the students.

In *Kurikulum Merdeka*, English is taught since elementary school. Some schools have implemented English subject at first and fourth grade. As an example, in *Gugus Diponogoro Jembrana*. Some schools here have implemented *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar*. However, English subject has to insert to the learning process. Here, the writer found that English subject is taught by the teachers who have not English education background. This subject is only taught by the teachers who have basic education

background. From the preliminary observation, the teachers have problems in teaching English to young learners. **First**, the teachers' ability to write, master the structure and pronounce English word is an obstacle in learning English in elementary school. **Second**, the teacher starts learning directly on the topic without giving brainstorming. **Third**, learning facilities and parental support for student learning progress.

METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative research which analyzing the teachers' perception of teaching English to young learners. The descriptive research was conducted through collecting the teachers' responses to the questionnaire that was developed for this purpose. The data of this research are the teachers' perceptions of teaching English to young learners. **1)** The data will be collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire that was designed by the researcher consists of two main sections. The first was teacher's perception of teaching English to young learners, and the second was their problems in teaching English to elementary schools students. **2)** The data collection techniques, it was through questionnaires by the writer asked the English teachers to answer several questions. **3)** Documentation here were the data which collected, such as: RPP (mini lesson plan), Book or others materials used by the teaching in learning process. The data source is the teachers who teach English at first and fourth grade elementary schools in *Gugus Diponogoro* (Jembrana Regency) in academic year 2022/2023. There are 16 teachers who gave informations in this research. There 12 elementary schools here, namely: SD Negeri 1 Yehembang, SD Negeri 2 Yehembang, SD Negeri 3 Yehembang, SD Negeri 4 Yehembang, SD Negeri 5 Yehembang, SD Negeri 6 Yehembang, SD Negeri 7 Yehembang, SD Negeri 1 Yehembang Kauh, SD Negeri 2 Yehembang Kauh, SD Negeri 3 Yehembang Kauh, SD Negeri 4 Yehembang Kauh, and SD Negeri 5 Yehembang Kauh.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes the three sections of the data, namely: the teachers' perceptions of teaching English in primary school, and their problems in teaching English to primary schools students.

In this section, it presented the discussion based on the finding of the research. There were two discussions which would be elaborated about the finding, namely: 1) teachers' perceptions teaching English in primary school, and 2) teachers' problems in teaching English to young learners.

Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching English to Young Learners

Based on the finding above, the writer find the results that the respondents agree English subject which is taught earlier. Those are supported by answering the questionnaire to the respondents. According to Lightbown and Spada (1999;29), teaching English to young learner is easier because the children have golden age period in their brain. The result shows that English to young learners is important. By learning English earlier, it is considered that the children will have English skill foundation. In the context, the children will master basic English grammar which is useful for higher education. Learning English at elementary school is necessary although some problems found.

The teachers realized that teaching English to young learners (TEYL) must be maximum preparation before implementing it in the classroom. It refers to the proper materials. The teachers should concern with proper materials to encourage young learners' attention during in learning process. According to Slattery & Willis (2001) stated that primary students are the children between seven (7) until twelve (12) years old. The English teaching is different among primary school, junior high school and senior high school. When teaching in primary school, it will be challenging for the teachers. The young learners have unique characteristics and needs. The young learners are imaginative, active, easily bored, and have difficulty differentiating between things. They have low level of

concentration and love to do games in learning. They study independently in the classroom (Cahyati and Madya, 2019).

Futhermore some teachers said that the young learners would have positive development who start learning from the primary school. They would be easily to access some informations from other sources when they have studied from primary. In this digital era, it is important to master English earlier because some informations in the world they are able to access with the help their parents (Sepyanda, 2017).

The teacher should make effective interaction in the classroom. It is because the successful of learning process depends on the interaction with the learners. The learners should be given more chance to express their idea in learning process (Kusmaryati, 2020). In lack, the teacher only gives one-way communication to the learners. They sometimes uses the traditional approach in teaching. The effect is learners are not able to independent on the learning process. When the teacher uses traditional approach, learners are not exposed to get enough practice in English speaking. In *Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar*, the teachers are demanded to be creative in creating activities in the classroom. They must encourage the students to speak freely in learning process. Teaching English to young learner is very different with adult learners. The teacher will be easily to get childrens' interest and they are more enthusiastic in the teaching and learning process. The children are also easy to lose their interest, here, that is why the teacher must consider the appropriate English learning to measure the childrens' development level. The teacher can receive feedback from students and motivate them to come up with new ideas related to the topic. Teacher is one of observer who helps students to construct innovative learning.

Teachers' Problems in Teaching English to Young Learners

From the data obtained, the teacher stated that they are not confident in teaching

English at elementary school. They feel worried in delivering the topic because unqualified beckground of education. In general, respondents do not have English education qualifications and never attended any English training or courses. Whereas, Brook (1967) stated that an English teacher in elementary school must have expertise in English or have attended training to teach students. However, the author has an opinion that the teacher must come from English education and improving their abilities. In terms, teachers should understand the children's habits in learning foreign language. Therefore, the attention of the government, schools, and the community must be increased regarding the status of English teachers in primary schools.

In the classroom, the respondents usually have problems in teaching implementation. They expected that in teaching-learning process the students feel pleasant atmosphere. In fact, the teachers did not find their expectation. In English teaching, the number of students should be normal between fifteen to twenty students, but in fact, the number of students are thirty to forty students in the classroom (Dunn, 1983). For young leaners usually need more attention from the teachers. The students expect that they can be cared for more individually considering their young age. Availability of textbooks for teachers and students are also a factor supporting the success of this program. Data obtained shows that all teachers use textbooks as their guide in provide teaching materials. But some teachers have problems because they lack availability of textbooks for them. The teachers do not have guidelines for which books appropriate and meet the standards for use as learning material in class (Oktaviani&Fauzan, 2017).

Another thing that important to note is the problem of placing tables and chairs in the classroom. In a traditional class, students usually sit on the chair in a row and the teacher explain the lesson in front of the class. In this situation, the expected does not optomal. Therefore, the schools and communities help each other to provide good classroom facilities, so that students'

activities can take place fluent in the classroom (Dunn, 1983). From the observation, the respondents stated that they have not English education background. They freely choose by their school to teach English to young learners.

Another problem is the lack of teaching media. The teachers must prepare

teaching media which indirectly increases expenses themselves. However, the teacher is very happy to teach his students. It is the responsibility of the school to provide an ideal teaching environment. Another problem is there is no language laboratory and library facilities meet the standards of the school.

Table 1. Respondents' Educational Background

No.	Points	Descriptions
1	Educational background	There are sixteen teachers of elementary school who fill the questionnaire with different educational background, such as : 10 teachers come from S1 PGSD, 1 teacher comes from S1 English Education Background, 1 comes from S1 Penjaskesrek, 2 comes from Sejarah, 1 comes IPS, 1 comes from SMA. Here is not all teachers who teach English comes from English Educational Background.
2	Been a teacher	The average the teachers teach in the elementary school is about five (5) years. There are some teachers that have been a teacher around fifteen (15) years. And some teachers, they are teaching about ten (10) years. And others are about 1 year.
3	Attending English seminar for English to Young Learners.	Not all teachers can attend the English seminar. Only a teacher is active join in English seminar. It is because the teacher's interest in English subject.

Table 2. Result of the Reasearch

No.	Points of Questions	Obtained Data
1	Grade	In <i>Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar</i> , there are two grades that gain English in the learning, such as: first (1 st) grade and fourth (4 th) grade students. In <i>Gugus Diponogoro</i> , all schools teach English in level first and fourth.
2	Pre-teaching	The teacher start the learning with: greeting, icebreaking, reviewing the previous topic, delivering the learning objective, introducing to basic vocabularies.
3	Whilst-teaching	The students enjoy English learning when the teacher gives contextual topic. They are motivated taught about their daily events, times, seasons, objects that exist at school and at home.
4	Post-teaching	Teachers conclude the learning with summarizing the topic.
5	Problems	Many problems are faced by the teachers in teaching English in <i>Gugus Diponogoro</i> , such as : - The students are difficul to understand English.

		- The students are confused about the language. - The students come from different background, in case they do not have enough vocabularies. - Lack of learning media. - Student self-confidence, many of them are still embarrassed to express their idea. - Incorrect pronunciation from the students. - Students are not familiar with English. In teaching English, it is nessessary teacher who has English Educational background.
6	Learning Media	It is still limited learning media to teach English. Here in <i>Gugus Diponogoro</i> , the teacher only uses book and resources from the internet.
7	Teachers' Point of view	The teachers says that English is very important to teach in this era. It can be seen from the technology advances. The students are nessessary to teach English since young in order they do not experience shock culture when being in advance level. Providing English at elementary level can make students to have basic knowledge of English vocabularies from an early age. In addition, English learning requires habituation for students. When they study at a higher level, they will have good basic English knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Firstly, the teachers believe that by giving effective teaching materials, it can increase positive outcomes for students. They argue that students will be happier to learn and motivated if the material taught about their daily events, times, seasons, objects that exist at school and at home. **Secondly**, the implementation of teaching English in elementary school is effective as a foreign language for introduction stage before going on higher education. **Thirdly**, the most problems are found in the implementation of the teaching and learning process in the class. The teachers think that the involvement of the school and the community has not help much in the implementation of the program. The teachers really expect the involvement of the school and community especially parents in the success of the English language teaching program in school basic education through the provision of adequate facilities for teachers in teaching those subjects.

SUGGESTION

Teaching English to young learner is very important. The learners are easier to understand in the next level. To make effective in teaching English to young learners, the schools/government/community should support learning process with adequating learning media.

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