

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

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This section deals with background of the study, research problems, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, and definition of key terms.

1.1. Background of the Study

Nowadays, English becomes the central attention of many institutions including work fields. People start to consider English important, not only to enroll themselves in higher educational institutions, but also to get better jobs and positions. It can be understood that a lot of jobs and good positions are offered to candidates who have a good mastery of English, both oral and written. Therefore, each candidate should be able to fulfill the qualification of English as required by higher educational institutions or positions s/he expects to obtain. Realizing how important English is for the progress of our country, the government established English a long time ago as the first foreign language to be taught officially, as a compulsory subject to all Indonesian students, starting from junior high school to the higher education or in universities. The objective of teaching and learning English as compulsory subject in Indonesia, as in the 1994 Curriculum for junior high school (SLTP), is to be used by students as a medium to develop themselves in term of science, technology, art, and culture. However, the main objective of

studying English in junior high school is for the students to have listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills at the end of their study. Those skills are taught through integration, using a meaningfulness approach and supported with the English components, such as, vocabulary, phonology, and structure.

Based on the explanation of the 1994 Curriculum for junior high school above, in terms of the objectives for explicitly learning English, it is expected that the majority of Indonesian people, especially those who have the opportunity to attend schools and universities, possess both receptive and productive skills in English. But in fact, it is widely acknowledged that many graduates who have learned English from junior high school to senior high school and even in the university do not show a satisfactory mastery. The mastery of English displayed by the average college students in Indonesia, despite his six years of training at Junior and Senior high school, is virtually rudimentary. We do not know who or what to be blamed, as the failure is too complex and interdependent (Sadtono, 1995: 43).

To overcome the issues above, a bright idea to improve the proficiency of English among learners arises. The idea is to try teaching English earlier at primary schools. Halliwell (1994: 3) states that young children do not come to the language classroom empty-handed. They bring with them an already well-established set of instincts, skills and characteristics which will help them to learn another language. To identify those and make the most of them, children: (a) are already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily without

understanding the individual words; (b) already have great skills in using limited language creatively; (c) frequently learn indirectly rather than directly; (d) take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do; (e) have a ready imagination; and above all, (f) take great delight in talking.

Furthermore, very young children are able to understand what is being said to them even before they understand the individual words. Intonation, gesture, facial expressions, actions and circumstances all help to tell them what the unknown words and phrases probably mean (Halliwell, 1994). In this case Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982: 78) believe that the acquisition of children under the age of ten years toward foreign language is better than the age of puberty. If the children learn English in a natural situation, for example, the acquisition of sounds they learn will be almost the same as native speaker.

In Indonesia, English has been taught as a *local content* in primary schools (Elementary Schools). The decision to include local content curriculum is based on the *1994 curriculum of Elementary Schools* issued by the government (Sutarsyah, 2004, in Cahyono, 2004: 281). The curriculum mentions that there are nine types of subjects that should be taught in primary schools, including local content (Depdikbud, 1994). The type of local content subjects is decided by local government and officers of the board of the Department of Education as the stakeholders. Local content is defined as the manifestation of local policy in the field of education based on local needs and situation. This local content is

designed to equip students with some skills which are needed by a certain region or province. They should be integrated with other subjects taught in Elementary Schools. Thus, every Elementary School may include some subjects suitable with the condition and characteristics of the school's local region.

The government, however, does not prepare teachers to teach these local content subjects. The curriculum mentions that the responsibility of the implementation of teaching local content subjects is given to the local schools. This means that the schools should make use of available teachers to deal with these local contents including English. With the introduction of English as a local content in Elementary Schools, the demand of English teachers for these schools is likely to increase. To respond to the increasing demand for primary school English teachers, it is important to prepare students who will be English teachers with knowledge and skills concerning the teaching of English for young learners (Sutarsyah, 2004).

Further, **the Ministerial Decree No. 060/U/1993** stipulates that English can be taught legally at the Elementary Schools as an elective subject starting from grade four as far as it is needed by the local community and the teacher of English is available. The objective of the English program in Elementary Schools is to enable the students to comprehend simple oral and written English expressions. The choice of the local content subject should consider the need of the local environment and the particular characteristics of the area.

Based on the descriptive phenomena above, this study will focus itself on the readiness of Elementary Schools in the regency of Sidoarjo, East Java, in implementing the Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) program. It seems that the Elementary Schools in the regency of Sidoarjo, East Java, are enthusiastic to teach English even though many of them have to hire part time English teachers, besides, the qualification of the English teacher is still worrying, and some do not have the skill(s) to teach English.

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher is interested to describe the readiness of Elementary Schools in the regency of Sidoarjo, East Java in implementing TEYL. Readiness, according to Page and Thomas (in Supeno, 1996: 13), involves all aspects of human life that refers to maturity of mental, thinking, emotion, physiology, and attitude. They states that readiness is a person's physiological condition that is ready to respond to something. Readiness that is as *'want, wish, and competency of effort'* for an activity depends upon maturity of experience and mentality.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Based on the above background, it is considered essential to do a study on the implementation of teaching English as a local content subject at Elementary Schools in the regency of Sidoarjo, East Java. Thus, the questions that this study is to answer are:

- (1) What is the readiness of Elementary Schools in the regency of Sidoarjo, East Java, in implementing TEYL as a local content subject?
- (2) What important factors could influence the readiness of Elementary Schools in the regency of Sidoarjo implementing TEYL as their local content subject?

1.3. Objective of the Study

Based on the problems stipulated above, the writer aims at describing the purposes of this study as follows:

- (1) To describe the readiness of the Elementary Schools in the regency of Sidoarjo, East Java, in implementing TEYL as their local content subject.
- (2) To find out the important factors that influence the readiness of Elementary Schools in implementing TEYL as their local content subject.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to be useful for not only a few groups of people who care with the field of education, especially in the TEYL, but also to the curriculum designers, the policy and decision makers in education, and Elementary school English teachers. It is expected:

- (1). To give contributions to the heads of the Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (The Department of the Education and Culture) of the regency levels of East Java. The information about the readiness of Elementary

Schools in implementing TEYL may give an overall and comprehensive pictures of teaching and learning English at Elementary Schools, so that they would be able to make an appropriate decision to support the TEYL program.

(2). To provide beneficial information to the curriculum developers in the East Java Province that they can at least design the English Basic Course Outline (GBPP) in a curriculum which is suitable to the needs, social-culture, environment and the age of young learners.

(3). To convey fruitful information for English textbook writers for Elementary Schools, helping them improve the quality of their textbooks. It means that the content of the English textbooks should be in line with the age, grade and capability of young learners.

(4). To the English teachers of Elementary Schools, to evaluate the appropriate teaching method and technique that can fulfill the young learners' need.

(5). To further researchers who are interested in English instruction at Elementary Schools, the findings of this study will deliver useful information, such as using a broader location to study.

(6). Finally, the findings of this study are very crucial for the local Institute of Teachers Training instructors, especially those of the English Education Department (IKIP, FKIP, STKIP), because they can offer an optional subject on teaching English for young learners in their syllabus.

1.5. Limitation and Scope of the Study

1.5.1. Limitation of the Study

The readiness of Elementary Schools in the regency of Sidoarjo, in implementing TEYL is limited on the *problems* and the *objectives* of the study. The problems mentioned above are of the School Principals, English Teachers, Students' parents, the English Curriculum, English TextBooks, Schools' facilities to support the TEYL. Whereas, the objectives mentioned above are of the readiness of the School Principals, English Teachers, students parents, the English Curriculum, English TextBooks, Schools' facilities to support the TEYL.

1.5.2. The Scope of the Study

The analysis of the current study attempts to focus on the problems and objectives stated above, which involves the readiness of Elementary Schools (ES) and the factors that can influence the readiness of ES in implementing TEYL in Sidoarjo, East Java.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation of terms used in this study, it is essential to give a detailed explanation as follows.

- (1) **Readiness of elementary schools** in this study refers to School principals' attitude towards the necessity of English to be taught at Elementary Schools.
 - a. **The readiness of students' parents** refers to the expectations of parents whether English is necessary to be taught or not at ES and their support to cooperate with schools.
 - b. **The readiness of the teachers** in this study indicates to the availability of English teachers who fulfill their requirement to teach English in terms of their background or their teaching experience; teachers' roles in the teaching process; their ability in selecting and preparing their teaching methods and teaching materials, their capability in managing the classroom, and even becoming the real model for their students.
 - c. **The readiness of facilities** refers to availability of English teaching-learning facility which can fulfill the teachers' and the students' needs, such as instructional materials development, books in school library and funds in conducting teaching and learning activity.

- (2) **Local content** involves certain courses chosen outside the national core curriculum that is considered necessary to be given to students in the area with the aim at providing opportunity for them to develop their ability. The course can be: local arts, computer, English, local handicrafts, knowledge about characteristics of specific environment and other things felt necessary for the school or region.
- (3) **Young Learners** as defined by Rixon (2000) means children between the ages of about 5 years old to 12 years old. He states that in the British educational system, and those in many other countries, this corresponds roughly with the years spent in the primary or elementary stages of formal education before the transition to secondary school.
- (4) **EFL** (English as a Foreign Language), according to Rixon (2000: 7), is usually taken to mean the learning and teaching of the language in situations where the use of English outside the instructional situation is not institutionalized in the society – where it has no official place as the language of legislation or as the medium for some types of state-supported education.
- (5) **TEYL** (Teaching English to Young Learners).
- Teaching English to Elementary Schools students / young children is different from teaching high school students and adults. Elementary Schools students are young learners with their own characteristics – biological, cognitive, affective, personality, and social characteristics.

The Elementary Schools students are young learners who like doing things, playing games, and singing songs. The main objective of teaching English to young learners is to let the students know that beside their native and national language, they can also have a foreign language, in this case, English (Suyanto, 1997 in Sadtono, 1997).