

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Teaching English to young learners has become an important part of primary education, as children are at a stage where they can absorb new languages naturally through meaningful exposure and engaging learning experiences. The English curriculum for young learners is designed to support children's physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and language development through age-appropriate activities, such as songs, games, stories, and interactive classroom tasks. Ideally, the curriculum should be implemented in a way that encourages young learners to develop early communication skills and positive attitudes toward English. However, the implementation of English teaching in many Indonesian primary schools has not yet reached its optimal potential.

In reality, several challenges still hinder effective curriculum implementation at the elementary level. Many schools face limitations such as insufficient instructional time, lack of appropriate learning materials, and classrooms that are not fully designed to support active language learning. In addition, some teachers have not received adequate training in teaching English to young learners, which leads to the use of less effective techniques and activities that are not fully aligned with the goals of the curriculum. These issues contribute to

inconsistencies in classroom practices and prevent young learners from receiving the rich language exposure and interactive learning opportunities they need.

The need to provide meaningful and developmentally appropriate learning for children is in line with the Islamic perspective on child growth. Allah reminds us in Q.S. Ar-Rum verse 22 that the diversity of languages is one of the signs of His creation, indicating that language development is part of a child's natural growth and should be nurtured. This perspective emphasizes the responsibility of educators to guide children with care, awareness, and suitable educational approaches. This matter is in accordance with the word of Allah in Q.S. Ar-Rum verse 22:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ السِّنِّكُمْ وَالْوَلَوَانِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَلَمِينَ

Meaning: And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge.

Teachers of young learners must therefore understand that children learn language differently from adults; they rely more on experience, interaction, movement, and playful activities. Linguistic competence in children grows through exposure and performance using language actively in listening and speaking. When the curriculum is not

implemented effectively, children cannot develop these competencies to their fullest potential. For this reason, it is crucial to examine how English is actually taught in the classroom and identify which aspects of the curriculum need to be strengthened.

Considering these conditions, the researcher is motivated to conduct a study on the implementation of the English language curriculum for young learners, focusing on how it is applied in real classroom practices, what materials and techniques are used, and how the process can be optimized. This research is expected to provide insight into the current conditions of English teaching in primary school and contribute to improving learning quality for young learners.

Teachers of young learners should realize that they should not make their child's age the basis for their maturity. age the age when children can easily learn anything. The two are known as linguistic skills and language performance. Chomsky in Clark and Clark (1977: 6) noted that linguistic competence is defined as the ability of the individual to use a language, while linguistic performance, the actual implementation of that ability is specified in language speech and listening. Brown (1987: 24) has also argued that competence refers to the basic knowledge of a system, event, or reality. The ability to achieve something is not observed, idealized, to perform. Meanwhile, performance is the obvious and actual embodiment or realization of skill. It is the real thing to do: walk, sing, dance or speak. Based on the

previous description, this thesis discusses Principles and Methods of Teaching English to young learners, classroom management, and what to consider in designing teaching materials in order to make sense of new language for the learners.

English has become a crucial global language, and introducing it at the elementary level is vital for fostering early communication skills. Although English is no longer a compulsory subject under the 2013 Curriculum, the Merdeka Curriculum offers schools the autonomy to implement it as a local content subject, especially for young learners in primary education.

SDN Kuripan 2 Banjarmasin, as an adopter of the Merdeka Curriculum, provides English instruction tailored to the developmental needs of its students. This curriculum encourages a flexible and student-centered approach aligned with the values of the Pancasila Student Profile.

However, its implementation poses challenges, including limited teaching resources, teacher preparedness, and age-appropriate pedagogy.

Several previous studies have examined the implementation of English instruction for young learners in Indonesian primary schools. A study by Nana Apriliana, titled “The Implementation of Teaching English to Young Learners in Public Primary Schools in Pringsewu, Lampung Province,” used a descriptive qualitative method and found

that teachers generally followed the curriculum but faced obstacles such as limited resources and insufficient methodological support. Another study conducted by Sari (2019), using a survey and interview-based approach, revealed that many primary school teachers lacked adequate preparation and did not fully understand the goals of the English for young learners' curriculum, leading to inconsistencies in its classroom application. A more recent study by Lestari (2021) employed document analysis and classroom observation, and reported that many of the materials used in English classes were not developmentally appropriate for children, which reduced learning effectiveness. Although these studies highlight challenges in teacher readiness, curriculum application, and learning materials, they do not specifically address how the implementation of the English curriculum can be optimized within a particular school context. Therefore, the present research, "Optimizing the Implementation of the English Language Curriculum for Young Learners in SDN Kuripan 2," aims to fill this gap by examining strategies, materials, and classroom practices that can improve curriculum execution in a real school setting.

The previous studies share several similarities with the present research, particularly in their focus on examining how English is taught to young learners and the challenges teachers encounter in applying the curriculum in primary schools. Like those earlier works, this study also investigates classroom practices, the use of learning materials, and the

techniques employed by teachers during instruction. However, this research differs in several important ways. While earlier studies mainly described general practices, teacher readiness, or the suitability of teaching materials across broader school contexts, the present study concentrates specifically on optimizing the implementation of the English curriculum within a single school SDN Kuripan 2. Instead of merely reporting existing conditions, this research seeks to identify what aspects can be improved and how teaching strategies, materials, and methods may be strengthened to better support young learners. Thus, the study not only extends the findings of previous works but also fills a gap by providing a more focused, practical, and improvement-oriented analysis of curriculum implementation in a real classroom environment.

B. Definition of Key Terms

1. Optimizing refers to the process of maximizing desired outcomes and minimizing undesired ones in order to make something as effective or functional as possible.
2. Optimizing refers to the process of maximizing desired outcomes and minimizing undesired ones in order to make something as effective or functional as possible.
3. Implementation refers to the process of implementing a plan, concept, policy, or system through the execution of particular tasks, steps, or procedures.

4. Curriculum is used to describe a collection of planned, organized educational activities that are intended to support growth and learning. It includes all of the instructional program's activities, materials, assessments, and content.
5. Young Learners are that study in basic skill education in elementary and primary school the age of about 5 to 6.
6. SDN KURIPAN 2 (Sekolah Dasar Negeri Kuripan 2) This is a public elementary school located in the Kuripan area, providing basic education for children. As a "negeri" school, it is government-run and serves the community by offering accessible education, typically focusing on the first few years of formal education (grades 1–6). In JL. Gatot Subroto, Kuripan, Kec. Banjarmasin Tim., Kota Banjarmasin, Kalimantan Selatan 70236.

C. Research Questions

The main questions to be addressed in this research are:

1. How is the Implementation of English curriculum in SDN Kuripan 2?
2. What English learning materials are provided and used in the teaching process in SDN Kuripan 2?
3. What Techniques and Methods can be optimized in teaching English for Young Learners?

D. Objectives of Study

According to the research questions, the research aims to investigate:

The purpose of this study is to assess and optimize the English curriculum's implementation in teacher instruction of young learners and to investigate methods of curriculum optimization that can enhance the quality of English instruction at the elementary school level, as determined by the formulation of the research problem.

E. Significance of Study

This research aims to evaluate and optimize the current implementation of the English curriculum in SDN Kuripan 2, focusing on young learners. By understanding the challenges and identifying gaps in the existing curriculum, this study can lead to the enhancement of teaching methods, materials, and strategies used in the classroom. Optimizing these elements will directly improve the quality of English language education for students at an early age, which is crucial for their academic success in the future.

F. Assumption of Study

This study assumes that the successful implementation of the English language curriculum for young learners in SDN Kuripan 2 depends on several interconnected factors. First, it assumes that teachers possess sufficient pedagogical competence and understanding of the curriculum's objectives. Second, it assumes that students are naturally

capable of acquiring a foreign language through meaningful exposure and interactive classroom activities appropriate to their developmental stage. Third, the school's environment and available resources are assumed to support the implementation of English learning, including access to teaching materials and administrative support.

It is also assumed that the principles and methods used in teaching English to young learners can significantly influence students' motivation and language acquisition. Therefore, this study assumes that optimizing the curriculum will lead to a more effective, engaging, and contextually relevant English learning experience for students.