

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Research Background**

In this era of globalization, English plays a crucial role in international communication. In Indonesia, English is thus taught early in kindergarten or elementary school. Childhood experiences vary from country to country. In some countries, children are still protected inside their school, whereas in other places of the world, children their age assume adult responsibilities. According to Nunan (2018), the chronological span of young learners is from birth to the start of adolescence. Age has a crucial part in defining who young learners are, from the category of ages at which they become young learners through their last phase as young learners.

Young learners are children between the ages of six and twelve. In accordance with Penny cited in Aulia (2021) defined young learners are those who have completed seven years of formal education. Rixon quoted in Shaula (2011) stated that young learners are children between the ages of five and twelve who are enrolled in elementary or primary school. Pinter (2017) categorized young learners into three groups: preschoolers aged three, elementary school students aged five to seven, and elementary school or primary school students aged eleven to twelve. On the contrary, Suyanto cited in Oktaviani (2018) classified young learners into two groups: younger (elementary school students aged six to eight) and old

(elementary school students aged nine to twelve years old ). Six is the earliest age at which children may begin formal education in many countries. In contrast, twelve is the highest age at which children begin to achieve emotional and cognitive maturity.

Nowadays, English is taught as one of the elementary school subjects. English is a required subject in the school curriculums of the vast majority of the countries. In Indonesia itself used Merdeka Curriculum as their latest curriculum. Most schools in Indonesia have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. One of the fundamental changes in the Merdeka Curriculum is the policy to teach English at the elementary school level. There are three reasons behind the emergence of this policy: First, there is an indication that English proficiency is a necessity for Indonesian children. Second, maintaining the alignment of the English learning curriculum for all levels. And third, as a mitigation effort for equal distribution of the quality of education in the country (Jelantik, 2022). This policy has not yet been implemented in all elementary schools. Learning English in elementary school, for several schools in Indonesia is not new. Because some of them have taught English to their students and have felt the benefits. Some of them are taught through local content, but some are made as separate or compulsory subjects. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture's policy will provide fresh air for elementary schools that have taught English to improve the quality of their learning and at the same time become a challenge for schools that have not yet

taught English to their students. Most of the elementary schools that have set English as a compulsory subject are private schools. While public elementary schools usually teach English lessons starting in grade 3. That is one of the reason why some parents also enroll their children in English courses outside of school, because their elementary school does not teach English yet or the lesson hours are only 1-2 hours per week.

English teachers should be familiar with the English used by young learners. Each of the English skills, such as speaking, writing, reading, and listening, is taught in a different way. Zaremba stated in Boonkit (2010) that speaking skills seem to be the most crucial skill necessary for communication in the second and foreign language learning and teaching process. Widiastuti in Husna (2020) stated that speaking ability is a complicated skill since it involves crucial elements such as accuracy, including grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation, comprehension, and fluency. Since speaking is a complicated ability to learn and teach a second or foreign language, the teacher must employ the most effective way for learners to understand better.

Evaluation is necessary for every learning process to analyze or measure students' comprehension and ability to absorb information. The evaluation may take the form of a test or assessment. Assessment may be used to improve learning, empower students to take charge of their education, and give a quantitative measurement of students' progress. This is more likely reached when evaluation is objective and linked to the

program's instructional goals. According to Sadler quoted in Hanifah (2019) stated that assessment is a process where both students and teachers evaluate the quality of students' success or performance and draw conclusions about the learning that has occurred.

Brown (2010) argued that “assessment is an integral part of the teaching-learning cycle.” He considers that assessment and teaching are related components of the learning process. Nevertheless, assessing young learners is a challenging part of the teaching and learning process since their physical, motor, and cognitive development outpaces all other phases.

However, in the Holy Qur'an, Allah Almighty. has promised that after a servant gets into trouble, he/she will surely be given a way of ease. The following is His Word in Surah al-Insyirah verses 5-6:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا , إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

Allah clearly stated that everything difficult must be followed by convenience. The same is relevant for the difficulties or challenges in assessing English young learners' speaking ability. It is usual to experience various difficulties and challenges while teaching a foreign language. Teaching a new language does not have to be a chore. Although it has its share of obstacles, there are always solutions to get through them. One of the keys to all the difficulties is staying positive and always being confident in overcoming those challenges.

Problems and difficulties are actually there to strengthen humans, not weaken them. Like a teacher who faces problems and difficulties in assessing EYL speaking skills, it becomes a test and a challenge in itself to become a better teacher in terms of quality and competence. Problems and difficulties exist to mature people. Without problems and difficulties, perhaps people would not learn to be adults. However, it is natural and human for a person included muslim, to be sad when facing problems and difficulties. What is forbidden is desperate. Because, when a muslim desperate is a trait possessed by kafir. As Allah Almighty said in Surah Yusuf verse 87:

يٰۤاِبْنِيۤ اذْهَبُوۡا فَتَحَسَّسُوۡا مِّنۡ يُّوسُفَ وَاٰخِيۡهِ وَاَلَا تٰتٰیۡسُوۡا مِّنۡ  
رَّوۡحِ اللّٰهِ اِنَّهٗ لَا يٰۤاٰیۡسُ مِّنۡ رَّوۡحِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْقَوۡمُ الْكٰفِرُوۡنَ

In carrying out work as a teacher, certainly faced with various difficulties and problems related to students also the teaching and learning process. We are forbidden to despair because indeed Allah's mercy is so wide. Allah will provide convenience and a way out for all the challenges we are facing.

According to Inayah et al. (2019), the success of English learning is measured not only by student accomplishments but also by the learning process. Assessing students can be one of the teacher's efforts to motivate students to succeed in the lesson (Amalia, 2017). Because of assessing students, the teacher will know whether or not the students comprehend

the previously taught material and whether or not the learning objectives have been encountered. Following Alberta (2007), he noted that assessment might provide teachers with information on whether or not students' learning processes must be modified. Papp (2019) noted that while measuring children's abilities, we may utilize face-to-face interaction to evaluate their speaking ability and standard paper-and-pencil assessments to evaluate other skills.

When constructing a test to measure a learner's language skills, teachers must also remember that children and adults have distinct characteristics. According to Brester et al. quoted in Aulia (2021), children differ from adults. They prefer a variety of physical activities with frequent movement and variation. In addition, teachers should remember that there is a significant difference between what a six-year-old can accomplish and what an eight-year-old can accomplish. In conclusion, while assessing children, teachers should consider age-appropriate factors. A five-year-old kid cannot be assessed using the same test as a twelve-year-old. It must be difficult for EYL teachers to assess their students, which they must accept as a challenge.

Additionally, according to Nunan (2018), the growth of young learners is inconsistent. Some children may develop faster than others, regardless of cognitive, emotional, or social immaturity. Some children can read and write at a young age, while others cannot do so at the same age. As a result, assessing the English proficiency of young learners

presented teachers with several challenges. They should be aware of their student's progress, characteristics, and English-learning ability so that young learners may learn English effectively. In addition, they faced challenges in making the helpful classroom supportive, meaningful, full of practice, pleasant, and sociable (Shin, 2017).

Assessing speaking skills is a challenge in language teaching, especially for young learners. According to McCauley cited in Hutagaol (2022 ), assessing young learners is challenging due to their high activity levels, and they tend to be easily distracted by others. In addition, they have a shorter attention span, are wary of strangers, and perform inconsistently in new surroundings. In agreement with her, Grieve quoted in Hutagaol (2022) asserts that assessing young learners is more complicated than assessing other learners due to their temperamental uncertainty, which may influence their cognitive abilities. Teachers must have high sensitivity while selecting the most effective assessment techniques. Young students have distinctive traits. They are regarded as poor test-takers. It will be challenging to assess young learners prone to making mistakes.

In this research, the researchers focused on analyzing the teacher challenges in assessing English young learners' speaking skills. Based on the researcher's first hand observation, the researcher decided English First, an English Course in Gatoto subroto street, Banjarmasin as the research setting. The researcher choose English First because the students

there matched the required participant criteria in this research, which is English young learners. The students in EF mostly are young learners from 4-12 years old. Therefore, the researcher want to know wheater there are challenges in assessing young learners' speaking skills faced by teachers at English First. Starting from this problem, the researcher conducted a stuwith the title "Teacher Challenges in Assessing English Young Learners' Speaking Skills".

## **B. Definiton of Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding as well as misinterpretation towards the title, it is necessary to explain each term as follows:

### a. Challenges

The definition of "challenges" in the English Dictionary is (the condition of being confronted with) something that requires mental or physical effort to do successfully and hence tests a person's ability. Challenges are things that aim to arouse our determination to test how capable we are in overcoming a particular problem.

Challenges are very different from problems. One could even say that our outlook plays a decisive role in identifying something as a challenge or problem. Some obstacles that one person sees as a challenge may be seen as a problem by another. This is why we can say that our view plays a key role in understanding whether it is a challenge or a problem. *Teacher challenges* are the obstacles and



difficulties that teacher have or faced in properly teaching the learning process, including assessing students skills.

b. Speaking Assessment

According to Huba & Freed quoted in Nasri (2010), assessment is defined as any methods used by the teachers in testing students' understanding and mastery of current knowledge. In this research, it is related to how the teachers provide information of students' progress and achievements.

Speaking is the most difficult of all four skills in language to assess, according to language assessors. Either we must observe a "live" oral performance in order to assess it, or we must record the performance in order to assess it later. Assessment is a component of the teaching and learning process, with the goal of fostering growth in both the assessor and the student being evaluated. Therefore, assessment can be determined as a method for enhancing the quality of education because it can increase continuous learning skills and performance in a variety of educational settings.

c. EYL (English Young Learners)

Children from six to twelve are considered young learners. According to Penny cited in Aulia (2021) defines a young learner as a child who has completed seven years of formal schooling. It signifies that young learners are children aged five to twelve who attend elementary or primary school in the education system. English for

Young Learners or commonly abbreviated as EYL is teaching English to young children. Early childhood here refers to children starting their first year of formal schooling, or it can also be said starting from elementary school to the beginning of junior high school. Students can get English teaching through schools or English course.

### **C. Research Questions**

Based on the background of the study, the researcher formulates the research questions as follow :

1. What are the assessment techniques used by the teacher in assessing EYL' speaking skills?
2. How the teacher used the assessment techniques in assessing EYL' speaking skills?
3. What are the challenges faced by the teacher in assessing EYL' speaking skills?

### **D. Research Objectives**

Based on the research questions above, the reseracher formulated the objective of the study as follow :

1. To identify the assessment techniques used by the teacher in assessing EYL' speaking skills
2. To analyze how the teacher used the assessment techniques in assessing EYL' speaking skills
3. To find out the challenges faced by the teacher in assessing EYL' speaking skills

### **E. Research Significance**

The main purpose of this research is to find out the challenges faced by the teacher in assessing EYL' speaking skills. Furthermore, this research can be beneficial for the following :

- a. Students who are interested in English for young learners can get insight related speaking assessment techniques for English young learners and how to apply it in the classroom.
- b. Teachers who teach young learners will eventually can find out the techniques of speaking assessment and how to used it in assessing English young learners' speaking skill. This study also can contribute to help teachers to understand about the challenges faced in assessing English young learners' speaking skill. The researcher hopes it can enhance teachers performance in assessing English young learners' speaking skills.
- c. Providing information and consideration for future researchers. This research is expected to give additional information about techniques of speaking assessment and the challenges in assessing English young learners' speaking skills.