The Needs of English for Elementary School Students: From Family to School

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Abstract: In line with Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy, which emphasizes the simultaneous role of home, school, and community in education, this study addresses a significant change in the Indonesian primary school curriculum. Several years ago, the Indonesian government removed English language instruction from elementary schools. However, the recently introduced Kurikulum Merdeka has reinstated English as a local subject in primary education. This reintroduction has generated concerns among TEYL (Teaching English for Young Learners) professionals, challenging the notion of the golden age of language acquisition. Young learners are believed to benefit from extensive exposure to the English language due to their rapid knowledge acquisition potential. Consequently, this study seeks to investigate the perspectives, interests, and needs of parents, teachers, and schools regarding the implementation of English language instruction at elementary schools. This quantitative cross-sectional study involved 383 participants selected through a purposive sampling strategy. It employed a survey research approach complemented by triangulation and Cronbach's Alpha tests to ensure validity and reliability. The findings of this research are poised to offer invaluable insights for parents seeking the best educational opportunities for their children and TEYL experts striving to enhance their teaching practices and methodologies. Additionally, this research highlights the demand for early childhood English language education. It serves as a foundational resource for evidence-based improvements in the educational landscape, ultimately benefiting the Indonesian youth as they navigate the complexities of the modern world.

Keywords: teaching English for young learners, stakeholders' needs, school readiness

Introduction

In the Indonesian context, the role of English in the curriculum is a matter of contention. The independent curriculum allows English to be included as one of the local contents, but it was not a subject in elementary schools until recently, as per Curriculum 2013 (Supriyanti, 2014). In Yogyakarta, English was treated as separate from the national curriculum in 2004, with the primary focus being to introduce English and foster a love for the language, ensuring students are well-prepared to engage with it in the later stages of their education. Despite the potential for early language acquisition, Indonesia's curriculum decisions are still far from embracing the golden age theory. It is a theory that emphasizes the unique ability of a child's brain to absorb and comprehend various subjects, including foreign languages (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). It is considered a sensitive period for language development, marked by exponential growth in neurological density and complexity (Knickmeyer et al., 2008; Lyall et al., 2015; Piaget, 1970; Tottenham & Sheridan, 2009). Furthermore, they also have a critical period that needs language exposure, such as English. This period starts at two years old and ends at puberty (Friedmann & Rusou, 2015; Widodo & Dewi, 2018). It is a crucial state where children can acquire language at their best. Children who miss this phase might face difficulties acquiring first and second language.

This oversight hampers the early introduction of English to preschool and elementary school children, which is vital in preparing the younger generation with English language skills and

competencies, considering its significance in various fields (Fandiño et al., 2019). The delayed integration of English subjects into primary schools represents a missed opportunity to equip young learners with essential language skills.

Previous studies have been held concerning the topic. The first research done by Mutiah and Friends (2020) examines the teachers' and students' points of view regarding their readiness to have English courses in preschools and elementary schools in some Indonesian regions. Another research was conducted by Kusmaryanti (2020). It seeks elementary school teachers' perspectives on TEYL implementation in the classrooms. Yet, there is a lack of findings encompassing the comprehensive perspective from related parties in TEYL implementation in elementary schools about implementing the current curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Given these educational dynamics and the unique context of Indonesia, especially the Yogyakarta region, it becomes essential to explore whether parents desire early English language education for their children, starting as early as preschool and elementary school. Moreover, it is equally necessary to solicit the insights of experts in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) to understand the pedagogical implications of teaching English to young children. To achieve this, conducting a thorough needs analysis study is warranted to ascertain academically and accurately the requirements and objectives of English language learning for early childhood and elementary students.

Those parties are essential in TEYL development. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, a renowned figure in Indonesian education, this transformative process must encompass three distinct realms, commonly referred to as the "three educational fields": the family, the school, and the community. These three educational domains form an intricate web that shapes a child's development (Noviana, 2018; Prihatni et al., 2019; Sugiyanto et al., 2023). Hence, for a child to thrive, they must receive holistic education across these settings (Atma et al., 2021; Jinabe & Triastuti, 2023; Kamaludin, 2023, 2023; Lestari & Azizah, 2023). These three educational environments must work in tandem, reinforcing one another. While family education is vital in nurturing children's potential, formal education holds a special place (Hermanto & Pamungkas, 2023). In Indonesia's vision for a "golden generation" by 2045, formal education, particularly at schools, must equip students with the skills and knowledge required to achieve this goal.

This study seeks to investigate the perspectives, interests, and needs of parents, teachers, and schools regarding the implementation of English language instruction at elementary schools. The outcomes of this study hold the promise of being invaluable to both parents seeking the best educational opportunities for their children and TEYL experts looking to refine their practices and methodologies. This research sheds light on the demand for early childhood English language education. It provides a foundation for evidence-based improvements in the educational landscape, ultimately benefiting the Indonesian youth as they navigate the complexities of the modern world.

Methods

This research encompassed a quantitative cross-sectional study involving elementary schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It is under the umbrella of quantitative research steps (Lodico, 2010). It started by identifying the research topic and conducting a literature review underlining the TEYL area. After that, the researchers developed the instruments to gather the data. To address the research objectives, the researchers developed a comprehensive questionnaire comprising four main dimensions under related theories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018): (1) the Needs Analysis for the TEYL (Teaching English for Young Learners) program in primary schools, focusing on the specific requirements and preferences for teaching English to young learners (Graves, 2003; Education Unit Implementing the Independent Curriculum in the 2022/2023 Academic Year, 2022), (2) school/parents' perception of children's ability to acquire language, exploring perceptions of language learning abilities in young learners (Ellis, 1998, 2015; Scovel, 1998), (3) school/parents' interests in English language learning in primary schools, examining the level of interest and importance attributed to English language education (Ellis, 2015; Changes to the Decision of the Head of the Standards, Curriculum, Educational Assessment Agency of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 008/H/KR/2022 Concerning Learning Achievements in Early Childhood Education, Basic Educa, 2022; Sayekti et al., 2023), and (4) school readiness to provide English language subjects in primary schools, exploring the preparedness of schools to introduce English language subjects in their curriculum (Koppich & Esch, 2012; Guidelines

for Implementing Curriculum in the Context of Learning Recovery for the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, 2022; Weiner, 2009). Next, the questionnaire was piloted and administered as a small-scale group tryout before being given to the study participants. Online questionnaires were administered to the selected participants, with clear instructions for accurate and consistent responses. The data were gathered in the middle of 2023. A purposive sampling method was employed to select a representative sample of schools. Finally, the last step is passed by analyzing and interpreting the survey results.

In data analysis and evaluation, this study adapts the quantitative data analysis stages proposed by Creswell (2018), comprising five stages. The first stage is reporting the sample number information. The participants included 211 parents, 136 teachers, and 36 school principals. Then, the researchers provided a descriptive analysis of data for all variables. There are four variables in this study presented in some parts. The first and fourth parts are primarily made up of optional response categories. Participants were permitted to vote for a multiple answer/option. As a result, face and content validation was carried out with expert judgment to ensure that the items were coherent and corresponded to the study objectives. Meanwhile, the Likert scale serves as the answer type in the second and third sections of the study instrument. Point "1" denotes "strongly disagree." Point "2" signifies disagreement among the participants. Point "3" depicts the participants' reasoning for agreeing with the statement. Lastly, people picked point "4" to indicate "strongly agree". The third step is identifying the statistical procedure since each item's research result contains a scale. The researchers used Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS 23 statistics software to process the data and examine the validity and reliability. To examine the validity and reliability of the second and third sections, the researchers perform the Cronbach's Alpha test. After that, the researchers processed the data using the statistical computer program. The findings revealed that the second segment received a score of 0.789. Besides, the third segment had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.937. Both values were greater than 0.6, indicating no random error (Ali, 2021), in other words, the items in the second and third sections were trustworthy and justifiable. The data underwent analysis in graphs and charts, and certain survey items were converted into percentages employing spreadsheet algorithms. Lastly, the researchers subsequently shared the findings. In the next part, descriptive statistics present the report of the investigated data.

Results and Discussion

The research participants predominantly comprised teachers and parents of upper-level elementary school students, grades 3-6, from Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia. This study evoked participants' enthusiasm for the performance of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in primary school. Around 92% of parents, 97% of principals, and 90% of those who completed the survey were available for follow-up interviews to explore further perspectives on the area. They were avidly interested in this topic and were thrilled to contribute to the TEYL implementation.

This section elaborates on the correlation between the findings of the research and the theories underlying the study. It is presented in four areas following the research questions points, namely: (1) the needs analysis for the TEYL program in primary schools, (2) school and parents' perception of English language acquisition in young learners, (3) schools and parents' interests in English language learning in elementary schools, and (4) schools' readiness to provide English subject in primary schools.

Needs Analysis for the TEYL Program in Primary Schools

The TEYL program requires tailoring the materials and teaching methods to children's needs. Consequently, a thorough needs analysis is needed. The first part of the survey serves as a part of the needs analysis for the TEYL program in primary schools. To be precise, the section focuses on the target needs, including necessities, lacks, and wants.

1. Necessities and Lacks

Indeed, whether English should be taught to elementary students is an ongoing debate in our education. The polarization of argument is evident in its ever-changing allocation in the national curriculum (Alfarisy, 2021; Zein, 2016) and the differing school regulations on the provision of the subject. Some national education experts have previously argued that English is not necessary at the elementary school level, and the curriculum should focus on building character as well as instilling national cultural values instead (Alwasilah, 2012). This has even led to the abolition of the subject in

elementary education during the implementation of Curriculum 2013. Additionally, there is an argument that most young learners learn English because they are required to, not because they need to, as almost no near circumstance urges them to communicate in English (Hariyadi & Yanti, 2019).

Nevertheless, the findings of this study proved otherwise. English is seen as necessary in primary education by 99% of stakeholders for two main reasons. On a smaller scale, the TEYL program is deemed necessary to prepare the children for their future education (CGD10027, CGD10034, CGD10094, CKSD10001, CKSD10020, CKSD10025, CWMD10006, CWMD10021). Some participants even believed the children would only be ready for the English subject in junior high school if they started studying it in elementary school. In a broader context, the TEYL program is crucial to nurturing children who face global demands (CGD10052, CGD10086, CGD10118, CGD10126, CKSD10019). A comment from one of the participants summing up the reasons for supporting the provision of English in elementary schools as follow.

> *"English needs to be taught to elementary school students because not all students have a family that gives them special attention so that they can learn English. Children have already been prepared for the next stage of life through learning at school, considering that English is very important for students to adapt to current developments."* (CGD10034)

The awareness of the importance of mastering English in facing global demands is nothing new. Dated back to 2015, the public urged that English be brought back to the national curriculum in preparation for the ASEAN Economic Society treaty (Zein, 2016). The fact that the aspiration of the present study's participants is in line with the public outcry at that time is evidence of the consistent need for English provision in elementary schools.

The idea of the necessity of English subject implementation in elementary schools is also in line with previous research conducted by Adisti and Friends published in 2021 (Adisti et al., 2021). More than ninety percent of the research respondents believe introducing English in early childhood education is necessary.

2. Wants

The wants investigated in this survey included preferred learning resources, methods, and themes/topics. Teachers' instructions were the most preferred for the learning resources as they gained a little over 90% votes from the participants. As seen in Table 1, coursebooks, books in general, and songs were the preferred learning resources, with more than 60% voting for each. Following them were movie excerpts and exercises from the internet. Besides, a few respondents suggested other learning resources such as conversation, practices, games, and interesting learning media.

Table 1. Preferred Learning Resources

Learning Resource	Percentage
Teachers' instructions	90.1
Coursebooks	68.5
Books in general	64.5
Songs	62.6
Movie excerpts	55.6
Exercises from the internet	48.2
Others	11.0

Next, the methods preferred were also investigated. The researchers pre-listed some common methods in ELT and TEYL as options. However, participants were allowed to propose their other preferred methods. The summary can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Preferred Methods

Method	Percentage
Classical	62.3
Text-based	51.4
Project-based	51.1
Total Physical Responses	39.7
Problem-based	38.7
Montessori	35.8
Others	4.0

Table 2 shows that the participants tended to support classical methods of teaching English. It is followed by text-based and project-based, which half of the participants preferred. Surprisingly, Total Physical Responses and Montessori, which are commonly implemented in English classes for young learners, only gained less than 40% support along with problem-based. A few participants recommended conversation, games, context, and roleplay to teach English to young learners.

Table 3. Preferred Themes/Topics

Theme/topic	Percentage	Theme/topic	Percentage
Alphabet and spelling	85.4	Children's attitude	64.0
Greeting and introduction	80.9	Grammar	57.0
Numbers	73.8	Technology	37.0
Self	72.2	Environmental issues	32.8
Family	71.6	Climate change	28.1
School	71.5	Space	27.5
Hobbies and sports	70.3	Others	3.0

Table 3 depicts the themes/topics the participants believed necessary to be taught in the TEYL program. It can be implied that the most significant demand was for the alphabet and spelling (85.4%). Then, the majority also considered greeting and introduction (80.9%), numbers (73.8%), and self (72.2%) substantial to be delivered. More advanced topics such as environmental issues, climate change, and space were not much preferred compared to the others as they gained less than one-third of the votes each. A few participants suggested more common topics such as daily conversation, physical appearance, living and non-living things, food, and culture. These findings matched the previous study regarding students' learning preferences. They believe mastering English language skills would benefit them and help them be more confident in spoken and written activities with underlying materials connected to their daily activities (Amalia & Albiansyah, 2023).

Regarding learning sources, teaching methods, and themes/topics preferred by stakeholders, it should be noted that stakeholders' voices mainly represented their wants. Meanwhile, wants might not always align with students' needs to succeed in the target situation (Rahman, 2015). Therefore, instead of adhering to the results as they are, it is suggested that they be treated as initial guidelines in designing the TEYL program.

Furthermore, suppose English in elementary schools is intended to prepare the children for their future study. In that case, adjusting the themes/topics learned in elementary schools with those taught in junior high schools is vital. It is aligned with the continuity principle in curriculum development. Based on this principle, there should be an interconnection between the curricula of various levels of education (Fauzan, 2017; Rahman Prasetyo & Hamami, 2020). Thus, it is recommended that materials developers for the TEYL program consult the curriculum applied in the next level of education or have sharing sessions with fellow materials developers/teachers in junior high schools.

Perceived Challenges and Contributing Factors
Apart from target needs, perceived challenges and contributing factors of meaningful and enjoyable learning in TEYL were also revealed in the first part of the survey.

Table 4. Perceived Challenges

Perceived Challenge	Percentage
Syllabus and curriculum are not available	63.5
Language style that differs from Indonesian	60.0
Lack of competent teachers	58.9
Lack of textbook	54.3
Lack of students' motivation	34.6
Lack of support from parents	14.4
Others	3.6

Table 4 shows the challenges parents, teachers, and principals perceive regarding the TEYL program. The biggest challenge is the absence of a syllabus and curriculum (63.5%), followed by the linguistic differences between Indonesian and English (60%). Over half of the participants also perceived the availability of competent teachers and textbooks as potential challenges in carrying out the program. Concerning the availability of the teachers, some participants hoped there would be a national recruitment of English teachers for elementary schools (CGD10041, CKSD10025).

Additionally, one-third of the participants saw students' lack of motivation as challenging. It is a crucial aspect since motivation is one of the big factors for the students to comprehend any knowledge (Setyorini & Izzaty, 2016). Meanwhile, it is confirmed that parents supported the program as almost all of them agreed on its necessity, and only a few of the cohort had a view that parents' lack of support might hinder the process of teaching English to elementary students. Other challenges were limited time, students' background knowledge, and lack of practice at home and school. With respect to the perceived challenges in teaching English to young learners, it can be said that the challenges are subject to the setting. A preceding study conducted by Widodo and Dewi (2018) and also Primary and Friends (2023) revealed that the challenges included students' lack of discipline during the teaching and learning process, students' varying levels of English proficiency, issues in forming daily habits of using English, and insufficient parental support. While the study was also conducted in Yogyakarta, some of the points were in contrast to the findings of the present study. Moreover, the settings were not limited to place settings. Certain methods (Jian & Pane, 2020), certain socio-economic conditions (Pramesty et al., 2022), and other specific circumstances might arouse particular challenges. Hence, a follow-up investigation of the specific settings where the TEYL program is implemented is required to complement the present study's findings.

Table 5. Perceived Contributing Factors of Meaningful and Enjoyable Learning

Contributing Factor	Percentage
Providing various interactive learning media	77.6
Giving motivation/explanation about the importance of English	77.2
Creating lessons based on daily life	64.1
Facilitating different needs	62.0
Directly encouraging students to use English actively	48.8
Using English as the language of instruction for other subjects	24.4
Others	2.9

Last but not least, in the needs analysis section, participants were asked about what they believe will contribute to the success of the TEYL program. The summary of their opinion is shown in Table 5. It is believed that various interactive learning media (77.6%) and motivation about the importance of English (77.2%) were the top contributing factors to meaningful and enjoyable learning. Creating lessons that are relatable to the students' lives (64.1%), facilitating different needs (62%), and encouraging students to use English actively (48.8%) were the next contributors. Meanwhile, less than one-fourth of participants regarded using English as the language of instruction for other subjects as influential.

Based on the results, it is justifiable to say that meaningful and enjoyable learning is more likely the combination of many factors, as most stakeholders choose more than one factor in the questionnaire. The top three perceived contributing factors, namely interactiveness of learning media, students' motivation, and authenticity of the materials, have been proven to support the learning process in general by previous studies (Hu & McGeown, 2020; Poerwanti & Budiharto, 2020; Umirova, 2020). However, we cannot rely on only one of those three or any other factor mentioned in this study since a single factor cannot guarantee the success of the learning process (Umirova, 2020).

All in all, the results of the needs analysis can be a basis for constructing a language program and an assessment for the ongoing process (Gonzalez, 1995). In line with that, the results of this study's first section of the survey can be used as justification for conducting the TEYL Program.

Schools and Parents' Perception of English Language Acquisition in Young Learners

It has been declared that the second dimension of the research instrument is aimed at exposing parents' and schools' apprehension towards young learners' English language acquisition. English teachers and school principals appear to speak on behalf of schools' outlook.

The trend indicates that more than 80% of stakeholders in this survey firmly believed the children's mother tongue is determined by their environment. 99 out of 211 parents, 23 out of 36 administrators, and 81 out of 136 instructors strongly agreed with the statement. It aligns with Skinner's theory of Behaviourism, in which children acquire language through their daily habits (Skinner, 1988). The theory also underlines the children's language acquisition mechanism process (Izar et al., 2020). The first stage is the imitation process, in which children acquire the language by mimicking their closest person's language pattern and vocabulary. Since children are good at imitating, their caretakers, including parents, teachers, and adults interacting with them, should be aware of what they are doing, including regarding language use (Nufus, 2018). The following process shapes the child's habituation to what they observe and hear, also known as the language acquisition mechanism. The last is the cognition process, where children grab semantic information, the knowledge about words, because they cognitively comprehend one's goal to make a phoneme utilizing a joint attention process.

Children's innate acquisition of language is one of the most significant internal mechanisms for them to grasp the English language. It is a process in which a person gains skills in comprehending and producing language. Brown (2015) emphasized that every child has an innate language mechanism entitled Language Acquisition Device (LAD) embedded since they were a fetus. An imaginary mechanism in the human brain allows infants to acquire and understand language swiftly. The language acquisition theory is highly related to speech perception/ segmentation and production, word learning, inflectional morphology, and syntax (Ambridge & Lieven, 2011). Every child has a different level in acquiring those skills, depending on internal and external determiners such as age, gender, intelligence, environment, economic level, and social status (Dardjowidjojo, 2012). Around 72% of respondents agreed that adults lack such a mechanism. It promotes the notion that children are talented wordsmiths, which was shared by more than 70% of respondents. On the other hand, some people argue that children are not excellent word creators but good impersonators. As a result, numerous parents and instructors believed they should be mindful of their actions since they are the exact example for the children, particularly regarding language use.

Even though children's language acquisition sounds like a natural process since it is an unconscious process (Nufus, 2018), it should be nurtured (Rice, 1989). Therefore, children with high language intelligence could acquire language more easily (Akbari & Hosseini, 2008; Gardner, 1983). In addition, first language (L1) acquisition could affect second (L2) or foreign language learning. L1 could be the basic one and helps the children comprehend the other languages. It is called transitional bilingual language (Meyer et al., 2020). The transitional bilingual language approach could help teachers and students build scaffolding from their mother tongue to English, as usually seen in most preschool and primary schools in Indonesia (Jinabe, 2022). As a concrete example, the students could be introduced to new concepts in a new language with the use and basis of the language they have learned. Moreover, it allows the children to respect their culture while learning other cultures in a language (Souto-Manning, 2016). This approach will make them comfortable in understanding and using the L2.

Learners who begin learning a second language (L2) as youngsters may have a more native-like accent than those who start as adolescents or adults (Damayanti, 2008). This view steals votes from 168 parents, 31 school principals, and 119 teachers. It also parallels one of the participants' experiences

(CWMD20059). She exposed English to her three-year-old child so that the English language became his first language. He could use the language for daily life communication fluently. Individuals who begin L2 acquisition at a younger age acquire the language faster than adults at first, except for pronunciation. Align with the response, more than 61.36% of participants are against the idea that adults who begin L2 study at older ages acquire the language faster than children, except for pronunciation.

Moreover, more than 80% of data agree that individuals who begin learning a second language (L2) as children perform better than those who start as teenagers or adults. They also believe that children have bilingual competence, which means they can learn two languages simultaneously. A respondent told a story of her child who has English as his first language (L1). He started to learn Indonesian as his L2 at six years old. It needs only about six months to be fluent in his L2, even though not as eloquent as his L1. In contrast to the preceding statement, approximately 60% of participants show disagreement with the idea that people who start learning a second language (L2) after adolescence are unlikely to acquire complete native speaker skill levels. They consider that age is not the only factor affecting language learning.

In Indonesia, English is mainly taught as a foreign language (EFL) besides local languages (such as Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese, and Banjar) and national language (Indonesian). It indicates that the children will be bilingual or multilingual learners while learning English. Surprisingly, as a participant shared with the researchers, young learners could acquire L1 and L2 at the same time. On the other hand, this phenomenon raises contrasting arguments that children who comprehend/ speak more than one language will be overwhelmed. They will be confused when using a particular language, especially when switching from one language to another. It is parallel to the fact that children store their second and foreign language together with their native language. However, research broke the fluster since those languages will be stored in different chambers in the human brain as time passes (Kennedy, 2006). Therefore, children could learn the language more systematically as teenagers and adults. In addition, learning a second language at a young age will not lessen their L1 acquisition skills (Marini et al., 2019); it will even strengthen their cognitive ability and muscle memory.

Therefore, there is a strong tendency from parents, teachers, and principals for young learners to start learning English at primary school. It is stated by the parties as follows.

"Learning English at an early age makes it easier to understand and apply." (CWMD20113)

"A person's language development must be accustomed to starting from an early age; moreover, the childhood period is the easiest time to instill concepts or habits." (CGD20114)

"The longer a person studies, the more vocabulary can be absorbed." (CGD20041)

*"*Learning when you are young is like carving on a stone; learning when you are an adult is like carving on the water (Indonesian proverb). That's true. Habit is the main key to success. Language cannot only be done in theory but must be practiced without fear of making mistakes." (CKSD20004).

It will benefit the young learners as they can comprehend the language skills as early as possible since English is an essential global language. Nevertheless, they might face challenges as a good role model (Atma et al., 2021), seeing that most young learners learn language by imitation. Therefore, all stakeholders should support young learners' language acquisition simultaneously, "All it takes is a willingness and willingness to learn plus support from all parties" (CWMD20096) "and the synergy between parents and teachers is needed" (CWMD20019).

All in all, the school and parents' perception regarding the children's language acquisition is aligned with the previous research held by Adisti and friends (2021). Children can acquire language when a particular motivation turns it on. Frequently, children's motivation grows when they are ready to comprehend specific information attractive to them (Jinabe, 2022; Montessori, 1949). Therefore, related parties ought to give young learners interesting yet meaningful learning to boost motivation to use the language. It is good news that their vision is following the theories underlying the research, especially the children's language acquisition comprehension. They have considered the children's language acquisition as it should be. This finding leads to the stakeholders' support for the children's

English language learning. It will benefit the children since research shows that children with high care have outstanding bilingual language outcomes (Hong et al., 2023). In addition, it also satisfies one of the goals of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kemdikbud*) in the TEYL area. The ministry wishes to develop TEYL in primary schools with the help of stakeholders (Education Unit Implementing the Independent Curriculum in the 2022/2023 Academic Year, 2022).

Schools and Parents' Interests in English Language Learning in Primary Schools

The stakeholders strongly postulate the importance of exposing young learners to English. It is due to their apprehension towards the children's language acquisition. It then fabricates the criteria for TEYL implementation in formal education at the elementary school level. Those variables also correspond to their desire to see TEYL carried out in elementary schools: "I would be grateful if there were English instructors in primary schools" (CWMD30016).

People in the chain, 70% of parents, teachers, and school principals value English as a worldwide communication language in a broad range of areas. As this implies, it should be learned as early and as young as possible. As a result, they may be more fully prepared to compete in the real world, where both skills and knowledge are required, as "in the future, the English language will be highly demanded to compete in the working world" (CWMD30019). It is parallel with Fandino's point of view to advance their life socially, academically, and economically (2019). English language learning could increase the learners' opportunity to gain both knowledge and skills, 95.04% agreed. Learning English at a young age also provides insights into oneself, society, and global work prospects, as well as comprehension of diverse methods of thinking (60.05%). Therefore, they have to prepare for it in their school phases. Moreover, they consider learning English as a second foreign language could benefit the students by boosting their intelligence (Akbari & Hosseini, 2008), boosting their brain capacity, and strengthening their core memory (Kennedy, 2006). Most parents and school facilitators are aware of the language learning for the students.

Years ago, English punched to the bottom of the sea. Nevertheless, even if the public primary schools cut off the subjects, the private schools captured the needs and interest in the English subject. So, they keep it in their classrooms. It was a relief for some parents of primary school students who wanted to keep their children exposed to the language used in formal education. Therefore, they put their children in private schools and even give them English courses (Cathrin et al., 2023; Supriyanti, 2014).

Years passed, and the government noticed how English courses were indeed essential for primary school students. So, the government brought back the English course in primary schools with *Kurikulum Merdeka, Merdeka Belajar*, in February 2022. It was a relief and trilled news for all parties concerned since parents and school facilitators received support from the government so that we could meet English in classrooms again. Thus, we can see that all parties, including the government, have the same vision to expose young learners to English.

Exposing the English language to the students in the teaching and learning process is somewhat as challenging as giving materials to teenagers or adult students. There should be scaffolding to teach the language to the children depending on their prior skills, "I agree that it's easier for students to learn based on their phase." (CGD30034); otherwise, they will get perplexed.

"What my kid had experienced (in the school, before enrolling at the elementary school level) was she/he only used mother languages (Indonesian and Javanese), then suddenly, when she/he entered grade 2, got English with Cambridge-module-based. The teacher was not mastering the materials, and the parents did not understand; it was a combo problem." (CWMD30121).

Consequently, only 7.12% contradict the various skills and learning materials given to the students with different levels of education. Most participants believe that English learning in phase A (grades 1 and 2) should emphasize oral language skills such as listening, responding to instructions, and speaking. Children in phase A can be introduced to simple English texts that bring enjoyment, known as reading for pleasure. At the end of this phase, students are expected to be able to communicate in English orally in the context of everyday life. English language learning in phase B (grades 3 and 4) emphasizes spoken English abilities while introducing students to written language, which has a distinct pronunciation from Indonesian. As a result of this phase, students are expected to be able to understand and respond to spoken and visual texts in simple English. It is also appropriate for English language learning in phase C (grades 5 and 6) to improve students' spoken and written English abilities. Here, the

students are expected to be able to understand, respond to, and produce spoken, written, and visual texts in simple English.

In addition, the implementation of a learner-centered approach in English class drew the attention of 92.69% of respondents. Therefore, they deemed the learning process that focuses on students suitable for them. It is aligned with the government's English learning design and Tyler's theories (1949) of the practical learning approach for the students. Other than that, a text-based approach (GBA) is also suggested to be applied in English classrooms. The learning is focused on theme-based text in various modes, whether oral, written, visual, audio, or multimodal. The communication is held at the level of texts, not only sentences. It refers to the idea that the meaning is conveyed not only by words but also by contexts. Moreover, each text has its own goals, such as describing, explaining, and storytelling (Agustien, n.d.). The government also sets pairs of skills embedded in English learning, which differs from the general skills known in common English teaching. Those elements are *menyimak-berbicara* (listening-talking), *membaca-memirsa* (reading-watching), and *menulis-mempresentasikan* (writing-presenting). The skill pairs are referred to as the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Overall, all stakeholders included in this research recognized the importance of learning English. They argue that the language should be taught to children as early as possible. This interest has already risen years ago, as found in the previous research (Zacharias, 2010). The language ought to be delivered with gradual difficulties, based on their level of proficiency. Therefore, student-centered learning was considered an appropriate technique for young learners to acquire English.

Schools' Readiness to Provide English Language Subjects in Primary Schools

The last part of the questionnaire focuses on unveiling the schools' readiness to provide English language subjects in primary schools. In examining the data gathered through the questionnaire responses from school principals, several vital insights emerge, shedding light on the dynamics and readiness of primary schools concerning the provision of English language subjects.

One critical aspect concerns the key players involved in delivering English subjects. Most respondents emphasized teachers' pivotal role, underscoring their significance in the teaching process. Students were also recognized as essential participants. However, it is worth noting that only a few principals cited the involvement of parents, the community, or other stakeholders. This highlights the need for broader engagement and collaboration to enhance the effectiveness of English language education in primary schools.

Furthermore, the survey revealed diverse approaches to teaching English. A significant proportion (66.7%) of primary schools approach English as a foreign language, while 27.8% regard it as a second language. This variety of approaches indicates a need for curriculum flexibility to cater to schools' differing needs and contexts. It aligns with the government's latest English curriculum for primary school students. It provides different content for different levels of students to accommodate their background skills (Education Unit Implementing the Independent Curriculum in the 2022/2023 Academic Year, 2022). However, there is no further research conducted to measure whether the curriculum has met all the students' diverse needs at each level.

The decision-making authority within the school environment is another critical dimension. Most principals reported holding this authority (88.9%), followed by the school committee. However, regarding decisions in the regional context, the head of the department and district head play a significant role. This division of authority suggests the importance of coordinating efforts between school-level and regional-level stakeholders to align with educational objectives (Education Unit Implementing the Independent Curriculum in the 2022/2023 Academic Year, 2022).

Crucially, the data also highlighted the level of stakeholder support in primary schools. More than half of the respondents indicated that stakeholders were "very supportive." The support manifested in various forms, including providing learning materials, moral support, and English language training for teachers. This positive support underscores the collaborative spirit within these educational communities, facilitating the growth and development of English language programs (Atma et al., 2021; Sugiyanto et al., 2023).

Another key finding pertains to the availability of teachers and English syllabus/materials. Over half of the principals (52.8%) reported that teachers were unavailable, suggesting a potential shortage in this area. It is aligned with the previous research conducted by Diyanti and friends (2020), who found

that English teachers for young learners are limited in terms of quantity and quality. Another research conducted in Central Java revealed that only 14 percent of the teachers teaching English have a license to teach English (Adisti et al., 2021). Over many years, English teachers for young learners have been a major problem and a critical unmet need. However, the majority of respondents noted that classrooms were adequate for English classes, indicating a solid foundation in terms of infrastructure, as has been found in research held by Mutiah and friends (2021).

Lastly, most school principals expressed a strong agreement (69.4%) regarding the necessity for teacher training. This points to a recognized need for ongoing professional development to enhance the quality of English language education in primary schools. The government has even given the green light to anyone willing to help provide English for children at the elementary school level.

In addition, the school principals gave some statements through open-ended questions, categorized into various vital points. First and foremost, they emphasize the necessity of a clear legal framework for forming English teachers in elementary schools (CKSD40001). They stated that having a well-regulated system is fundamental to ensuring the quality of English language education in these institutions (CKSD40008; CKSD40010; CKSD40014; CKSD40027).

Moreover, school principals highlight the significance of the English subject in elementary education (CKSD0002; CKSD40013; CKSD40016; CKSD40026). They acknowledge that English is pivotal in the curriculum and needs to be integrated effectively. However, they also recognize that the current setup primarily relies on homeroom teachers with minimal English teaching abilities (CKSD40004, CKSD40028). This underscores the need for English teachers with strong competencies, emphasizing the importance of teacher training and continuous professional development.

In the context of infrastructure, principals stressed the importance of adequate facilities and resources to support English language learning (CKSD40003; CKSD40022; CKSD40023; CKSD40029). They call for government support through policies, funding, and other resources and emphasize the need for a legal framework involving various stakeholders (CKSD40005; CKSD40006).

Furthermore, the principals recognize that it's crucial to garner support from all parties, including parents, to create a conducive environment for English language education in primary schools (CKSD40025; CKSD40036). They also suggest implementing English learning tools and materials as essential references for the teaching process.

This findings and discussion section elaborated on issues in TEYL that are merely in line with the previous related studies. It indicates that the problems in the field are real. Moreover, the perspectives of the stakeholders are more or less the same. The statements from school principals underscore the multifaceted challenges and requirements in enhancing the readiness of primary schools for English language education. They highlight the importance of legal regulations, competent English teachers, infrastructure, and the involvement of various stakeholders. Therefore, TEYL procurement in Indonesia is considered a vital aspect that still needs improvement in its implementation. Moving forward, addressing these concerns through comprehensive teacher training, collaboration between educational institutions and the government, and the active engagement of parents and the broader community is essential. In conclusion, all parties' collaborative efforts and synergy are the key to successfully implementing English language education in primary schools.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has shed light on several critical aspects of the Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) Program in Primary Schools. By exploring needs analysis for the TEYL program, we have identified the key factors influencing the effectiveness of English language acquisition among young learners. The insights gained from understanding the school and parents' perceptions of English language acquisition in young learners have also provided valuable input for curriculum development and pedagogical strategies. Furthermore, the findings of this study have revealed the interests of both schools and parents in English Language Learning in Primary Schools, underscoring the importance of collaborative efforts between educational institutions and families in fostering a supportive learning environment. Lastly, the investigation into schools' readiness to provide English language subjects in primary schools highlights the need for resource allocation and professional development to enhance the quality of language education. Nevertheless, this research captures data from particular subjects in a specific area. Therefore, further study is needed to unveil data from wider

areas so that it will provide thorough data underscoring this research issue. As we move forward, it is recommended that educational policymakers and institutions consider these findings to refine and strengthen the TEYL program, fostering a more conducive environment for young learners to acquire English language skills. This research not only generalizes the critical findings in English language acquisition among young learners but also offers obtainable recommendations for the next steps in improving the TEYL program, ultimately contributing to a more effective and comprehensive language education system in primary schools.

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