

Should We Teach English to Our Kids in Indonesia?

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Abstract: The influence of the English language in a globalized world has been acknowledged internationally. This widespread use underscores the importance of imparting English skills to individuals from a young age. However, recent changes in the Indonesian curriculum reflect ongoing debate, as primary school students are no longer mandated to learn English. This leads to the inquiry "Is English not that important for children?" and "Should we teach English to young learners?". The study delves into the discourse on teaching English to young learners in Indonesia, aiming to understand English teachers' perspectives on this matter. Two experienced English teachers who specialize in instructing young learners in Indonesia were engaged using interviews. Employing the narrative inquiry technique, the study seeks a comprehensive exploration of their educational experiences (Baden & Niekerk, 2007). The study's findings reveal a consensus among the teachers that teaching English to young learners in Indonesia has more advantages than drawbacks. Both educators argue that early exposure to the language enhances children's confidence and vocabulary knowledge, fostering a solid foundation for their future endeavors. This insight challenges the recent curriculum change and prompts a reevaluation of the decision to exclude English from the mandatory syllabus for young students. In conclusion, the study advocates for reconsidering the current educational approach in Indonesia, emphasizing the benefits of introducing English to young learners. It highlights the positive impact on children's linguistic development and overall educational trajectory, suggesting that early English education contributes significantly to their long-term success.

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INTRODUCTION

As the de facto universal language of the modern world, English is used in almost every setting, including business, education, technology, and the economy. English is adopted as a second or foreign language in many nations where it is not the native tongue, and it is taught to students from an early age until adulthood. For instance, English is taught as a foreign language and is a required component of the curriculum in Indonesia for a long time. However, in recent years, due to the changes in Indonesian education's curriculum, the English language has no longer been a compulsory subject at the primary school level in Indonesia. Since then, English has been "deleted" from the core curriculum in primary schools, especially in public schools, according to a study by Diyanti & Madya (2021). English is no longer taught in elementary schools. This notion brings forth several issues: Is English not necessary for young learners? So, the government erased it from the compulsory subject in the curriculum. Is it wise for the government, in this case, The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, to do so?

Over the years, teaching English to young learners or children in the EFL context has been debated. In addition, the notion that should a child learn other languages from a young age, the better their language proficiency will be is spread and known (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013). This highly questionable assumption makes people argue about which is better: Should English be taught to children or young learners while they are still young? Should the teaching only start when the students are mature enough to comprehend it? There are pros and cons regarding this matter.

Early English instruction for young learners has been shown to be advantageous and necessary (Jaekel et al., 2022). According to Oktaviani & Fauzan's (2017) research, teachers concur that early foreign

language instruction benefits students' performance since young learners are more likely to absorb the content. Furthermore, economic globalization forced workers to be able to use English to compete with people from other countries. In addition, Indonesian parents are enthusiastic about ensuring that their children can master English for a better future. This finding is in line with the theories suggested by Piaget (1971), Vygotsky (1962), Freud (1935), and Bruner (1961) regarding children's constructivism development, social behavior, and the social-emotional development every child has. Considering the stages, it can be inferred that early learning of foreign languages can benefit the child's steps. In other words, learning foreign languages can positively impact the students as they are engaged in new knowledge, new situations, and new ideas to understand.

This study is expected to fill the gap in the previous research focused on students (Faridah, 2021). We would like to see the perspective of the primary school English teacher and the English course tutor for young learners regarding the particular issue, whether they show support or vice versa. This study aims to contribute more to enriching research on the specific topic. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the question:

What is the view of the primary school teachers and EYL course teachers towards the use and the importance of English for young learners?

The outcome of this research is expected to be beneficial in several ways, such as providing a more comprehensive understanding of the issue by filling the research gap in previous research, understanding educator's perspectives can influence educational policies, and the creation of curriculum development that meets the preferences of both the teachers and the students in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges of Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia

Several problems regarding English teaching are unavoidable when we implement it in a country where English is not the first or the second language. The government policy, the university curriculum, and the system for teacher professional development are the three primary obstacles to raising the standard of EYL in Indonesia (Musiman et al., 2020). First and foremost, the government should proclaim English as a subject that all pupils in elementary schools must take. By stating the abovementioned, the government should have created the syllabus, curriculum, and English teaching resources that Indonesian primary school teachers would utilize. If the government takes these steps, primary school English instructors can set and attain clear, specific targets. Additionally, the teachers' usage of standardized material will rise.

The second obstacle focuses on talking about skilled English teachers, which is typically a problem for higher education institutions (Musiman, et al., 2020). As a higher education institution, the English education department is primarily responsible for enhancing and increasing English's human capital (Alhasani & Alhasani, 2016). The curricula that the English department institution developed may produce high-quality English teachers for primary schools. Qualified primary school English teachers supported by a well-developed and good curriculum will be able to produce positive results (Lengkanawati, 2005). In addition, curriculum modification is also necessary as one of the efforts to enhance Indonesia's education to ensure it is successful. Recruiting qualified English teachers for elementary schools in Indonesia is another crucial effort to enhance education. Additionally, the instructor is vital to the program and the focal point of teaching and learning (Setianingsih, 2019).

Finally, a robust structure for teachers' professional growth (Musiman et al., 2020). A solid professional development framework must be developed to increase the instructors' professionalism and keep them abreast of scientific and technological advancements. Professional development activities are reported to assist both new and seasoned instructors (Mahmoudi & Ozkan, 2015). According to Celik et al. (2013), the teachers considered the value of professional development, which supports the earlier findings. Sulistyorini (2014) also clarifies that professional development is vital for teachers and badly needed. Last but not least, Irmawati (2014) notes that various professional development methods for EFL teachers are successful in raising EFL teachers' professionalism. Consequently, there needs to be a robust structure for professional development.

English Language Position in Indonesia

All around the world, people regard English to be an international language. Furthermore, English has been used widely in practically every industry, including economics, technology, and education. As a result, English is used for various purposes and plays a significant role in various areas, according to Crystal (2003), which can be seen below.

In the realm of economic and business activities, the United States' status as the largest economy in the world impacts international trade, making English essential for companies aiming for international success. This is especially true in the tourism sector and for multinational corporations with foreign headquarters that require employees proficient in English. In international relations, English serves as one of the official languages of the United Nations and other significant international organizations. Diplomats often study various languages, but English frequently serves as a lingua franca when mastering a nation's native tongue proves challenging.

In the media, English dominates current events and popular culture. A substantial percentage (57%) of newspapers are produced in countries where English has special status, and major advertising agencies are typically American-owned. Most radio and television programming worldwide is in English, and English-language films dominate the film industry, with 80% of feature films distributed theatrically in 2002 being in English. In the 1990s, 99% of popular music bands performed only in English, with some performers' English lyrics taking on symbolic, sociopolitical, or literary significance. Education also sees a significant impact, with most scientific articles across all disciplines written in English. The language is increasingly popular as a medium of instruction in colleges and universities, particularly in management, computer technology, and humanities courses. English is widely taught as a foreign language, especially for students planning further education in English-speaking countries or needing it for work.

In terms of communication, English dominates global communications, comprising over 80% of all electronically stored information worldwide. Despite the internet's capability to handle various languages and non-Roman scripts (Hussain et al., 2005), fully utilizing online information is almost impossible without a strong command of English. Finally, English is the language of air traffic control and maritime navigation in international travel and safety.

In Indonesia, English is a prominent global language that offers opportunities for social and economic mobility (Zein, 2019). This notion has been kept for a long time, from the Indonesian Independence Day in 1945 until now (Nababan, 1991; Zein et al., 2020). English is considered the first foreign language to be taught in Indonesian schools earlier than Arabic, German, and French (Nababan, 1991). Regarding the position, indeed, English is a foreign language that has been taught for generations. We know it as the EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Additionally, English plays a significant role in various fields in Indonesia, including education, business, tourism, technology, and international relations (Goridussukur et al., 2018). In education, English is used as a medium of instruction in some private schools and through internationalization programs at the tertiary level, such as student exchange initiatives and teaching practicums (Walker et al., 2019). Many local companies now require job applicants to demonstrate English proficiency in business, reflecting its importance as a global language essential for communication and collaboration (Zein et al., 2020). In the tourism industry, English is extensively used to cater to international tourists and facilitate communication with visitors from English-speaking countries (Goridussukur et al., 2018). Similarly, in technology, English is employed for various purposes, including communication, software development, and accessing online resources (Goridussukur et al., 2018). In international relations, English is a crucial language for communication with foreign diplomats, international organizations, and during international conferences and negotiations (Zein et al., 2020). Thus, the widespread use of English in these fields underscores its importance as a critical language for global communication and interaction in Indonesia. To sum it up, this shows that English is crucial and very beneficial for Indonesian students to learn. Therefore, it is unfortunate that English is no longer a mandated subject, considering the usefulness and importance of English taught to students.

The Policy of Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia

One side of Indonesia's policy on teaching English to young students comes from the government, in this case, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kemdikbudristek Dikti*), and the other comes from the curriculum guidelines for Indonesia's primary schools.

1. The Policy of The Indonesian Government

In Curriculum 2013, English was not listed as a local subject for elementary school students. It is no longer a compulsory or intra-curricular subject. Instead, it now works as an elective course subject for primary schools. Some believe this approach reflects the Ministry of Education of Indonesia's conflicting views on incorporating local or mandatory English content into the elementary school curriculum. Additionally, among those involved in education nationwide, this has suddenly emerged as a significant problem (Habibi and Sofwan, 2015).

Kurikulum Merdeka became the most recent curriculum to be applied in Indonesia. However, it is still in the implementation trial stage and is only applied in some schools, mostly in big cities. *Kurikulum Merdeka* is the recovery curriculum for education in Indonesia after the pandemic (Nugraha, 2022). The teachers can design lesson plans, teaching materials, methods, and strategies. There are three free choices given for the school to implement *Kurikulum Merdeka*: Apply some of the principles of *Kurikulum Merdeka* by not changing the curriculum that the school used; using *Kurikulum Merdeka* by utilizing the learning infrastructures that have been prepared; and using *Kurikulum Merdeka* by developing their teaching tools (Rahayu et al, 2022).

2. The Curriculum of Elementary School

English was one of the local content disciplines available for the school to select during the 1994 Curriculum. It indicates that at this time, English may be taught to pupils in primary schools as a local subject. There is no requirement that pupils in elementary schools learn English. Additionally, because English education is a local topic, the government allows schools and local governments to choose curricula and syllabuses. Due to their human resource knowledge of EYL, not all elementary schools and local governments are prepared and capable of building it. Additionally, there will not be a standard or model for EYL in Indonesia if no school is prepared and capable of designing it. According to Sutarsyah (2017), elementary schools have no comprehensive written English curriculum. The sole document readily available is a summary of an English topic, one of the local contents.

The Problems and Concerns Surrounding English Teaching for Young Learners in Indonesia

Indonesia's English learning and teaching policy has undergone many phases over the last few years. There have been many critiques over the process, and many opinions regarding the policy have resurfaced from many people, including parents, teachers, and students.

A study by Faridah (2021) reported that students think proficiency in English is essential for advancing academically and securing study-abroad scholarships. However, they admitted that insufficient English is taught in schools, and they still struggle with macro and micro skills. They choose to take English courses as a result. This means that many students think that the English lessons taught in formal schools are not enough to ensure their success in their proficiency, so they decide to enhance their English by taking extra courses outside of school. This finding is supported by a study by Diyanti & Madya (2021) which talked about the challenges of teaching English to young learners in ASEAN, including Indonesia. They state that since English is taught as a non-primary subject in formal and especially public schools, there has been a shift in the teaching and learning of English in Indonesia. Some major issues with teaching English in Indonesia are teacher under qualification, teacher scarcity, the ambiguous employment status of primary English teachers, class size and textbook availability, educational inequities, and worry over the endangerment of regional languages.

Another issue in teaching English to young learners, according to Kusmaryati (2020), includes the limited allotted time for teaching English and low proficiency levels in the students' pronunciation and vocabulary. Additionally, the schools' facilities, textbooks, media, and instructional materials are scarce. A classroom with too many pupils and very energetic students who prefer to flout the rules also causes issues for the teachers. However, the study also mentioned that more than 60% of the teachers at primary school levels agree that English should be taught at the elementary level. They believe that in order to familiarize primary school students with English as a foreign language, it must be studied as early as possible. The kids are still in their prime years, making learning new words and speaking English proficiently more straightforward. Additionally, it will assist students in studying at higher levels of school if they habitually study English. The rest of the teachers who disagreed with the notion argued that They

still have low skills and interests because the school is rural. Additionally, teachers typically only speak a basic level of English as well.

Similar findings by Nufus (2019) revealed that younger students benefit more from language learning in terms of pronunciation and speaking experience, which will improve their fluency and help them sound more native-like. The book used as a guide is still not convenient because teaching English to young students in Indonesia is not part of the curriculum and is only considered to be the local content of the school. As a result, the teacher should look for a suitable book to use as teaching materials, and the methods used should be engaging and enjoyable for the students. Additionally, the instructor must take care of the psychological needs of the students. Based on the study, it can be said that Indonesian teachers are not equipped enough to deal with young learners due to many of these problems.

Even though many teachers and researchers believe that teaching English to young learners will be beneficial in the long term, Sari (2019) raised awareness of some possible disadvantages of teaching English to kids at young ages. Previously, Sari highlighted some advantages of teaching English to young learners, such as creating opportunities for early diversity; the opportunity to learn from differences rather than being afraid of them is provided by multilingualism. The diversity that education brings when students take the time to study various cultures and ethnicities gives the individual greater power and self-confidence. However, it also exposes children to cultural confusion. Since English is a foreign language, it differs from the student's mother tongue. Grammar, letter usage, and reading comprehension can all vary. The fact that a child must learn thousands of words in a foreign language will undoubtedly stress them out because they must be spelled and pronounced differently from words in their native tongue. Early exposure to foreign languages can cause kids to lose touch with their native cultures. The end outcome is that culture will decline and possibly vanish. For instance, if a child learns English while living in Indonesia, he may doubt his identity. This may cause cultural confusion.

Consequently, aside from the problems that teachers and students face regarding the content of English teaching and learning itself, there is also a growing concern about the loss of the Indonesian language because of English teaching to young learners. Similar to the previous finding, Hakiki & Hidayati (2017) argued that Indonesian parents are in a dilemma because they fear that teaching their children English at a young age will endanger *Bahasa Indonesia* and lead to subtractive bilingualism. The process known as subtractive bilingualism is elevating the second language at the expense of the first language, which may result in the extinction of the first language. Similarly, Manara (2014) expressed the same concern in their study. The teacher from the study argued that the younger generation no longer finds Bahasa Indonesia appealing. Among the younger generations, there is a concern about the gradual language shift phenomenon. The teacher notices that particular societal attitudes about English and Indonesian appear to depict linguistic hierarchies. Compared to Indonesian, English is regarded as significantly higher, more prestigious, attractive, and superior. English's reputation has increased through commercialization, making it appear more substantial and superior to Indonesian languages. Younger generations, especially those from middle- and upper-class backgrounds, are beginning to exhibit subtractive bilingualism, which could eventually result in a gradual language shift in the context of their current teaching. If the institution's language policy and planning are not carefully considered and implemented, certain stakeholder attitudes about languages may emerge, endangering the survival of Indonesian languages.

METHOD

Research Design and Participants

The narrative inquiry method will be used in this study because narrative inquiry is used to investigate the educational experience, and researchers in this field believe that people are storytellers with many exciting insights (Baden & Niekerk, 2007). Narrative inquiry can be helpful in a variety of settings and academic disciplines. Almost often, those who take part in narrative inquiry love the process, and they frequently view themselves as co-inquirers and co-collaborators in the research they are involved in. According to Smithers (2016), applied linguistics is currently seeing a surge in interest in narrative inquiry as a qualitative research tool. The social sciences' turn toward narratives around the turn of the 20th

century coincided with a decline in positivist theories about how research should be done. Since we focus on a socio-science matter, we believe employing a narrative inquiry method is the best approach.

The two participants in this descriptive qualitative case study have taught English for over a year and specialized in teaching young learners. As a descriptive study, it focuses on each participant's distinctive qualities and viewpoints and extensively explains them. The first participant will be named 'Amanda' (pseudonym). She is an English teacher at a public elementary school in Indonesia. The second participant will be given the codename 'Bella' (pseudonym), and she is an English teacher at a notable English course in Indonesia. These participants were chosen due to their background knowledge of English teaching, especially English for young learners. Bella specifically was chosen because, according to a previous study by Faridah (2020), many students chose to learn English at an English course establishment because they deemed the English lessons at their school insufficient. Thus, we decided that we also needed the perspective of an English course teacher regarding the matters.

Both participants were interviewed to collect the data. The interview questions were modified from earlier research by Manara (2014), Sari (2019), and Faridah (2020). The seven interview questions will center on the participants' perspectives on teaching English, particularly to young students in Indonesia, as well as their prior experiences. Item 1 focuses on their experience in the subject matter; items 2, 3, 4, and 5 focus on their perspective regarding teaching English to young learners in Indonesia; item 6 focuses on their perspective regarding the advantage of teaching English to young learners and; item 7 focuses on the participant's perception of the possible disadvantage of teaching English to young learners. Follow-up questions may be added because the interview is done in an open-ended manner since In-depth discussion of subjects, comprehension of processes, and the determination of potential reasons for observed correlations are all possible with the use of open-ended questions alone or in combination with other interviewing approaches (Weller, Vickers, Bernard, Blackburn, Borgatti, Gravlee et al., 2018). The information acquired through the interview was reviewed by transcribing the voice recordings made during the interview. After that, it was thoroughly examined in light of past theories and findings. Several relevant quotations were chosen and used in the finding session.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the findings in two sections and the discussions: the perspective of a primary school teacher and an English course teacher for young learners.

Primary School Teacher's Perspective

Amanda has been teaching English for less than one year and teaching primary school students from the first to fourth grade in one of the private schools in Sumatra. Based on the interview, Amanda stated that teaching English to young learners is exciting and challenging. She liked the nature of young learners, where most would be curious about the new language or the unfamiliar language. Amanda teaches her students using some media to introduce new vocabulary; teaching vocabulary is necessary since her students are still very young. This aligns with the study by Kusmaryati (2020), which revealed that students' pronunciation and vocabulary levels at elementary school are still low. So, teaching vocabulary to young learners can add additional knowledge to the students regarding certain words on some topics that can help them build their prior knowledge.

"Teaching young learners is very interesting and challenging, especially for a lower grade like grades 1, 2, and 3, because they are still struggling with many things, especially in acknowledging some words in English. However, teaching young learners is very exciting because most of them are very curious about learning English. They have a big curiosity about English, especially when I teach them about new vocabulary by using some media."

Amanda saw the current curriculum as something good because she thought it gave young learners the freedom to explore the knowledge they want, which means not depending on the teacher with only one book. According to her, the same thing happened with the teacher, who could make the teacher more creative and adaptable.

"In my opinion, the current curriculum is already good. It gives more freedom for children to explore the knowledge they want, not depending on the teacher with one book only, and for the teacher it's fine, it's already very good so the teacher can also think creatively and adapt. For example, children are known to have many characteristics, so the teacher can adapt to the child's character with a particular method, particular strategy, or particular media so that the learners can accept it well. The second one is that we can adjust the objective of the lesson and the kinds of media that we will choose. It's more guided; we do not have to teach everything, so it's more selective on what can be done and what can't, based on the LO (Lesson Objective), as long as the LO can be fulfilled." - Amanda

Based on the excerpt above, Amanda stated the benefits of the curriculum for creative teachers, which can make them more creative and adaptable to teaching the students. It is up to the teacher to choose the teaching method, strategy, and media they want to use in teaching their students. In addition, she said that the curriculum gives the teachers free choices to select several things in teaching, such as learning media, the strategy, and the method based on what they want. In other words, as long as it supports the lesson objective, it can be done.

Regarding the teacher's stance, Amanda fully supported teaching English to young learners because she said it would be a waste not to teach the students the language since they are young. This is to make at least the students progress even though it is small; there has to be some understanding and comprehension of a specific range that they would get from learning it, which might be beneficial when they grow up to the next education level.

The next one will focus on the statement that the younger children learn English, the better their English proficiency will be. Amanda supported this statement with particular criteria; it depends on the student. Amanda thought there is the possibility that those who learn from a young age could become more fluent in English because their body, in this case, the mouth and tongue, have already gotten used to speaking it. Furthermore, the vocabulary learned at a young age can be remembered well by children because they often use and repeat the words. Amanda compared it with older learners who start studying English late; they might have no time to learn vocabulary and grammar because the adults have many things to do. However, she also implied that there are people with good memories, regardless of their age, who could manage their lessons and remember them well. So, in conclusion, it depends on the learners or the students, Amanda stated.

"(I think) this depends on the student. Maybe the sooner they learn English, they automatically know it first rather than those who learn longer; I mean, it's different (if we compare) people who learn English for a year and people who learn English for five years, and I think the reason why those who learn (English) sooner is more fluent is that their mouth has getting used to it, it's not stiff anymore, and probably they have remembered the vocabularies well because they use it often." - Amanda.

Lastly, regarding teaching English to young learners, Amanda mentioned several worries, including the worry that teachers did not teach the students what they needed to learn and that students did not use their language in daily life situations.

English Course Teacher's Perspective

Bella has taught English for over five years and has dealt with many students, including young learners. According to the interview, she admitted that teaching English to young learners is challenging, mainly because you need to master pedagogy, how to teach, and the content. Bella further explained that teaching young learners is hard at times because kids' emotions and moods are unpredictable, and the teacher needs to plan many teaching materials to fit their swinging moods.

Regarding the condition of English lessons in the Indonesian curriculum, although Bella was not familiar with the current curriculum since she mainly taught English in informal English courses, she admitted that, in her opinion, the curriculum has failed to ensure the success of young learners' English proficiency.

"I am not quite familiar with the curriculum, but I think most schools only focus on the outcome and not the process. Especially for kids, I do think it's bad because they would be more focused on the grade and not the process of learning itself." - Bella

According to the excerpt above, Bella argued that the curriculum in Indonesia focuses more on the outcome (grade) and not the learning process itself, which is a bad thing. She then explained that this is an important note to remember when teachers teach English to young learners. Focusing on grades will only make them insecure when they fail, leading to them having little to no confidence in learning English. Bella also explained that this is rather unappealing for young learners because the most important thing is to enjoy the lesson first, not acquire good grades.

When asked about some possible disadvantages of teaching English to young kids, Bella answered that, in her opinion, there are few to no disadvantages. For example, when the researcher asked Bella about the possible stress that learning English can cause to young children, she answered that such a thing could easily be avoided by providing a proper method to teach them.

However, based on her experience, Bella stated that none of her students showed any signs of being stressed and, in fact, enjoyed the English lesson. In short, she believed that even though there is a possibility that learning English can be stressful for young learners, as long as the teacher uses an appropriate method for young learners (like learning by playing), they can learn English without feeling stressed.

"And also, I think learning English when they are young is important too because, you know, they will be able to explore many things for themselves since information nowadays is mostly in English. So, they can access many new hobbies and new opportunities for themselves, which is a good thing overall."

From the excerpt shown above, Bella explained that English can be an exciting subject to learn because it can help them find various hobbies and interests that they might enjoy. Learning English by doing something that they enjoy will also alleviate possible stress.

Combined Perspective of The Participants

Based on the interview data from both participants, both teachers agreed that teaching English to young learners has more benefits than disadvantages. Even though their perception may differ on some parts. For example, Amanda and Bella have very different opinions regarding the current curriculum of English education for young learners in Indonesia. While Amanda considered the ongoing curriculum to be sufficient and advantageous because it gives both teachers and students the to explore English subjects in a variety of ways, Bella deemed the current curriculum to be inefficient because Indonesian curricula place more emphasis on the final product (grade) than on the learning process. Concentrating on grades will make them feel insecure when they fail, leaving them with little to no confidence in their ability to learn English. Bella added that young students would find this rather unappealing because their priority would be to enjoy the lesson rather than focus on getting good results. Despite their varying perspectives on Indonesia's curriculum, both agreed that teaching English to young learners is necessary to ensure that they are ready for the ever-changing multicultural future ahead of them.

Another interesting point that both participants agreed on is that they disagreed that learning English at a young age will ensure the students' success in their proficiency. Amanda argued that even though it may help with their language acquisition, what matters the most is how long they will study English. If they start young but do not continue their study, then obviously they would not be able to gain a good proficiency in English. Bella similarly agreed that just because someone starts learning English at a young age, it does not automatically guarantee that they will be a successful language learner. Bella asserted that what matters the most is the study habits that they will later develop. However, Bella mentioned that learning English from a young age might help students develop self-confidence.

Later on, when the participants were asked about their opinions on some possible disadvantages of teaching English to young learners, Amanda and Bella expressed deviating answers. Amanda conveyed her concern about young kids using profanities in her school. She made an example of her students who often would say bitch in a derogatory context because they imitated what they heard from someone else. Amanda then argued that it is part of the teachers' and schools' responsibility to show the students which words are appropriate and which are not. Bella, on the other hand, was aware of a similar problem. Bella admitted that there is much information in English that is spread on the internet that can be detrimental for young kids. Nevertheless, in addition to her statement, she added that we cannot blame English for

the bad influence they got from sources like the internet because it also exists in the Indonesian language. Bella placed more emphasis on the parent's role in making sure that the kids know which one is a good habit and which one is not because, in Bella's point of view, the children spend more time in their house with their parents rather than with their English teacher in school.

Concerning the decline of the first language that some experts have been concerned about in past studies, it seems that Amanda has no strong opinion. However, Bella argued that the worry of Indonesian kids losing their first language because they learn English at a young age is not a critical problem in Indonesia, at least for now. She believed that because most kids in Indonesia still use Indonesia daily, it would not be a problem. She also encouraged the parents to balance using both languages in their home.

DISCUSSION

The following section will discuss the importance of English for young learners and the participants' stance regarding the matter.

"I think it is essential because nowadays, everything, like every gadget or something, mostly uses English to play games (and) listen to music. So, the (English) learning is essential to ensure they (children) don't just imitate everything they receive from someone. For example, in games or in the films that they watch, there is someone else saying "bitch", they don't know what "bitch" means; they will just say "bitch, bitch, bitch" like that. So, if in school they've been taught the English language, especially the vocabulary, and words that are used, not only to be known but also to be used. Furthermore, (the school) tells which words are good to be used, and which are not; I think it is essential." -Amanda.

Based on the excerpt above, Amanda thinks that teaching English to young learners is very important because almost everything uses English as a language, such as games and music, which mainly uses English. She stated that sometimes her students like to imitate English vocabulary from someone else without knowing what it means. She added that her students sometimes said profanity words that were not suitable to be used by them. Therefore, learning English in a good way in school can make the students wisely use the language and not use lousy vocabulary, or at least they know the meaning of the words, so they don't just imitate any words. This is supported by the research from Kusmaryati (2020), which explained that English as a foreign language must be studied as early as possible because kids are still in their prime years; it simply helps them learn new words and speak English proficiently. In addition, it will assist students to study at higher school levels if they make studying English their habit.

"It is more about what kind of language needs to be learned, what kind of needs the children have, what they need, and more about it. The worry is that what we (teachers) teach does not align with their needs. (...) The worry is more about arranging their needs with the materials we prepared. The second worry is how the language should be known and used in daily life by the students." - Amanda.

Based on the excerpt above, Amanda stated that the teacher should give materials related to the student's needs, the lesson should revolve around that, and make sure it is relevant to be taught to the students. She gave an example: if the students need everyday dialogue, then as teachers, we should not teach them vocabulary about business because that's just irrelevant and out of context. In other words, the teacher's prepared materials must align with the student's needs. This is related to previous research by Lengkanawati (2005), which stated that qualified English teachers for elementary schools are needed to improve education. Amanda also expected the students to use the language daily, so it is the knowledge and the practice of speaking it.

The next part will focus on Bella's perspective on teaching English to young learners in Indonesia.

"I think it's a good step to introduce another language, especially English as an international language. Later on, people will need English for their future, so introducing English to young learners will prepare them." - Bella.

In the excerpt above, Bella explained that teaching English to young learners is essential in introducing another language to them. As an international language, English is an important subject to teach to prepare them for their future. These findings align with Kusmaryarti's (2020) findings, which

stated that English must be studied as early as possible to acquaint primary school kids with English as a foreign language. Bella confirmed that teaching English early on is pivotal and can benefit their social and professional lives. She argued that English will play an essential part in the future when they are applying for jobs or as simple as building friendships with foreigners.

Even though English is not a first or second language in Indonesia, and not everyone uses it, Bella believes it will play an essential role in their future life. This is in line with Crystal's (2003) claims that economics and business, especially international companies, rely on English to grow, which means that major companies will most likely choose applicants who can use English. It also supports Zein's (2019) findings that English is a prominent language that offers economic and social opportunities. English will also be able to help students maintain international relationships because English is used as a lingua franca in almost every country in the world. In Bella's opinion, teaching English to young learners will give them various opportunities in the future.

Aside from the benefit above, Bella also stated that teaching kids English early will make it easier for them to build confidence.

"Also, I think building confidence in kids rather than adults is easier. (...) Teaching confidence to kids is easier in a way, I think. When you are learning English -or any language- you can get easily discouraged by mistakes. With kids, I think they do not care that they make mistakes; they will just keep trying and trying. So, I think training confidence is easier when the kids are still young, especially when speaking another language."

From the excerpt above, we can see that according to her experience, training confidence in English students is easier when they start learning at a young age. Bella stated that when learning English, it is essential not to get discouraged by mistakes; kids tend to ignore their mistakes and keep trying. Similar to the findings by Sari (2019), introducing English to students from a young age helps them acquire a native-like and natural accent because they are used to speaking it from the beginning.

"Well, considering that ... I don't think so. (teaching English can cause stress in kids). Usually, kids are very excited to learn English, so I don't think stress will be a problem! Especially if the method is learning by playing. Indonesian schools have a problem making English too serious for kids so that it may be stressful."

The excerpt above shows that even though Bella was aware that the English education system for young learners in Indonesia might be stressful for them, there is a way to bypass it. This finding differs from Sari's (2019) finding that claimed learning English for young learners might be triggering BLAST (Bored, Lonely, Afraid, Angry, Stressed, and Tired) because they are forced to learn a new language from a young age. According to Sari, the fact that a child must learn many words in a foreign language, all of which must be spelled and spoken differently from terms in their home tongue, would stress them out.

After expressing her opinion on the advantages of teaching English to young learners, Bella acknowledged that there are also some worries regarding the topic.

"I mean, the internet is dangerous whether you know English or not. There is some information that will do more harm than good for us, and as a teacher, I think we do not have full control over it. Whether the kids start liking other cultures because they access said information on the internet, I think the parent's role is also important in this regard."

The excerpts above showed that although, according to Sari (2019), there might be worries about cultural confusion and the danger of declining culture, learning English has little to do with it. Bella stated that whether they know English or not, young kids can access dangerous information on the internet and get affected by it. In a further statement by Bella, she expressed that the role of the teacher in preventing this kind of danger is minimal because students usually spend more time on the internet when they are home with their parents rather than with the teachers.

In a later part of the interview, Bella explained that the parent's role is vital when discussing the possible disadvantages of teaching English to young learners when asked about the concern of Indonesian kids losing interest or even losing the ability to speak Indonesian because they learn English, which is the concern expressed in previous studies by Manara (2014) and Hakki & Hidayati (2017).

"Ahh, I guess that is a worry too (kids being unable to speak in Indonesian because they learn English), but in Indonesia, I think it is not a problem because we do not use English very often, too, so I think it will be safe regardless. Again, I think the parent's role is vital, so as long as they use Indonesia at home, it should not be a problem."

From the excerpt, we can see that Bella did not consider the problem a serious one in Indonesia yet because Indonesian kids still use Indonesia daily and rarely use English. Bella stated that because most Indonesian students only use English in the classroom, there will be no decline in Indonesian language acquisition. So, regarding the concern on Hakki & Hidayati (2017) express how Indonesian parents are in a difficult situation because they worry that teaching English to their children at a young age could jeopardize *Bahasa Indonesia* and result in subtractive bilingualism (the process of elevating the second language at the expense of the first language, which may result in the extinction of the first language), Bella stated that in her opinion, such thing would not be a serious problem as long as the parents encouraged their children to use Indonesia while they are in their house and focus on using English inside the classroom and sometimes when they are with friends.

Interestingly, when the researcher asked Bella whether or not starting to learn English from a young age would mean better proficiency, as Sari (2019) claimed, she mentioned that it has little correlation based on her experience. She explained that what matters the most is the study habits that the student will develop later. They can achieve good proficiency if they manage to be consistent in their study and keep learning English when they grow. However, if they become lazy and do not continue their study habits, it can be hard for them to achieve good proficiency.

The last discussion topic was about the position of English in Indonesia. A previous study by Manara (2014) revealed that *Bahasa Indonesia* is no longer attractive to the younger generation. The teacher from the study observed that particular societal views around English and Indonesian seem to represent language hierarchy. English is considered substantially higher, more prestigious, fascinating, and superior than Indonesian.

"Oh my god, yes! That is so true, and it is so sad! It is rooted in or started when the Indonesian curriculum erased English from most public schools. Well, most public schools nowadays (elementary) don't teach English, right? I think it worsened it."

The excerpt above showed that Bella acknowledged the problem and agreed that there is a specific language hierarchy between English and Bahasa Indonesia. In contrast, English is considered more prestigious and used by people from a higher class in Indonesia. She mentioned that based on her observation, this problem is aggravated by the new policy implemented by the Indonesian government that put English as a non-compulsory subject, so not all elementary schools have English as a subject, resulting in a limited chance for young learners to get access to English.

"So, you know, some schools, usually in the richer areas or private schools, their students will be able to speak English, and those who came from public school may feel inferior, you know? (...) Moreover, people with money can take their kids to English courses with better materials, and people with money can access more resources to learn English. So, teaching English to all kinds of kids is very important! So, everyone will have the chance to learn English, so there will be no social differences, and people will not think English is only for the rich."

Bella's statement above elaborated on her opinion regarding the notion of English and classism in Indonesia. She stated that since not all public schools have English subjects in their school, people who can afford it choose to go to an English course in order to teach English to their kids, which is very similar to the study done by Faridah (2021) in which students enroll in English courses because they believe the lessons they receive in formal schooling will not be sufficient to assure their success in becoming proficient. Meanwhile, not everyone can afford to enroll in an English course, creating a bridge between people who can get access to learn English and those who can't. Bella thinks that the new government policy above is worsening this condition. To eliminate this problem, the government must give everyone access to English education.

Research Advantages & Limitations

This research has several limitations, such as a low number of participants and a limited data collection method, as it only uses interviews to gather the data. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized on a large scale. For future research, we recommend using a larger sample and more data collection method to gather the data so that it can generalize the teacher's perspective more broadly.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, teaching English to young learners benefits the students, which act as a stepping stone to their learning and language development, which can finally lead them to better knowledge and understanding of the English language. Furthermore, teaching English to young learners may also boost their confidence in speaking and expressing their opinions without being afraid to make mistakes. Another point is that many international sectors, such as the economy, social and culture, education, medicine, news, and even politics, have already used English in the globalization era. Therefore, teaching young students English is expected to help them plan for the future when they become adults.

In this section, the author offers some recommendations for English teachers and other researchers based on the analysis and conclusions of the research. It is suggested that children start learning English at an early age to introduce them to the new language. The lessons and materials, in this case, should be suitable for them to use and teach something simple first. It is recommended that this study serve as a reference for future researchers, especially those interested in conducting research with the same difficulty. Hopefully, this study will be the subject of further investigation by future researchers.

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We also want to say how much we value the current discussions and debates in teaching foreign languages, especially the ones that center on the most recent adjustments to the Indonesian curriculum. The lively nature of these conversations gave our research a contextual framework and motivated us to investigate the viewpoints of English teachers and the possible effects.

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