

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In the context of English language learning in Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) at school. English lessons have begun to be introduced to young learners since the elementary level. The aim is to make students have sufficient time to acquire and be fluent in English. Having good English skills has a good impact on one's future. Moreover, nowadays many jobs demand graduates to have qualified English skills.

Learning a foreign language, in this case English, is very good to start being taught at the elementary school level. Young learners aged between five and twelve years are very good at learning languages because they are active learners and thinkers (Oktavia et al., 2022). Teaching English to young students is as difficult as teaching a foreign language. The teacher must know the characteristics of young learners so that the learning process can run well. According to Oktavia et al (2022), young learners are active learners who like to learn by doing.

According to Hardi & Rizal (2020), the age of young learners can be classified into two age groups, namely the younger group ranging from six to eight years old while the older group ranges from nine to twelve years old. Young learners can also be categorized by grade apart from their age, the lower grade or also known as level one, consists of students in grades 1, 2, and 3, while the upper grade, also

known as level two, consists of students in grades 4, 5, and 6 (Hardi & Rizal, 2020). At this age, young learners have a critical thinking period which is very good to be utilized in learning foreign languages in this case English. When young learners start to grow up, they will not be in the critical thinking period and will have difficulty in learning foreign languages (Oktavia et al., 2022). Therefore, teachers must know the methods that should be used to teach young learners.

The selection of learning methods is very crucial in the teaching and learning process. It can be stated that learning methods are the key to achieving learning objectives. The selection of learning methods to teach English must consider many things, especially in teaching young learners. Young learners have good abilities in learning languages however they still need to be well cared for because young learners have different characteristics from adult learners (Oktavia et al., 2022). According to Fajarina (2017), adult learners have the intention to learn but not with young learners who only follow what they want and like.

Currently, the Indonesian government in the education sector, which is handled by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), has issued a new curriculum, namely the Merdeka Curriculum. In this update, English is being taught again at the elementary school level, where previously in the 2013 curriculum English lessons were not required to be taught to elementary school students. What is of great concern in this curriculum is project-based learning (PjBL), according to Rahim & Khatimah (2023) Project-based learning (PjBL) is one of the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum.

According to Widiyati & Pangesti (2022), Project-based learning (PjBL) is a student-centered method, that involve students in problem-solving experiences with products as the result. The application of Project-based learning method in the learning process will encourage students to be more active in contributing and communicating in the learning process. Therefore, in the implementation of Project-based learning, the teacher's role is only limited to directing, leading, providing reinforcement, and assessing students.

In its implementation, project-based learning has several syntaxes in the learning process. According to Fahlevi (2022) there are six syntaxes in Project-based learning (PjBL), including 1). Start with essential questions, 2). Design a plan for the project, 3). Make a schedule, 4). Monitor students and project progress, 5). Assess the results, and 6). Evaluate the experience. In other words, the use of this method involved students in many ways. Students no longer passively only listen to the teacher's explanation and take some notes to the learning material, but students will be trained to cooperate with friends and train critical thinking skills to create a project.

The use of project-based learning has a good impact on students, this is evidenced by Almulla (2020) research which confirms that learning using project-based learning methods is very effective in increasing student involvement in the learning process. In addition, it was found that project-based learning helped students achieve better artifact performance, affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes (Guo et al., 2020). The use of Project-based learning as a method in learning English to young learners ill greatly train them in active communication

with friends. The implementation of PjBL provides opportunities for young learners to exchange information and knowledge through discussion and group work so as to complete the outcomes (Almulla, 2020).

The implementation of learning methods using Project-based learning is very good for students. This method can train students how to deal with existing problems. Students will be able to develop their critical thinking skills and will hone their skills better. The use of project-based learning will help the teachers to full fill in their tasks. In addition, the use of Project-based learning methods for students will provide a different learning experience. By implementing Project-based learning, learning activities are more meaningful and students are more enthusiastic about learning. According to Fauzi et al (2019), project-based learning is very effective in helping students develop confidence, problem-solving skills, and familiarize themselves with the concept of higher-order thinking. Project-based learning can be used to connect academic knowledge with students' real-world experiences and can attract students' interest in participating in the learning process (Hartono & Asiyah, 2019).

However, it is currently found that English teachers at the public primary school level in Bali still rarely implement project-based learning methods. While This condition is in contrast to the government's enthusiasm which strongly supports the implementation of Project Based Learning from an early age. According to Kimsesiz et al (2017), the reason why project-based learning is not widely used in EFL classes is due to teachers' ignorance of the effectiveness and application of project-based learning. In addition, according to Listyariani et al

(2018), most English teachers in primary schools do not have the special qualifications needed to teach young learners in English as a result they will use conventional and monotonous teaching methods. In addition, the project-based learning method itself requires many things, it takes days for students to complete a project with maximum results and skills from students and teachers, besides that it also requires adequate teaching facilities (Martati, 2022). Referring to this, in learning English there are still many teachers using one-way learning which is teacher-centered (Novita et al., 2022). As a result, students, in this case young learners, will not be able to master English competencies well and the young learners will not exert their abilities during the learning process.

According to Utami (2022), a teacher's educational background plays an important role in his development as an expert in the field he teaches. In other words, teachers with primary school graduate educational backgrounds for young learners do not have adequate skills in teaching English (Dewi et al., 2020; Listyariani et al., 2018; Utami, 2022; Virgianti et al., 2020). As a result of the mismatch in educational backgrounds of English teachers at the elementary school level, these teachers encountered several problems such as not being able to convey teaching material in English fluently, not being able to design interesting teaching media, and having difficulty in designing more focused activities to students (Utami, 2022). On the other hand, curriculum changes in the world of education create new problems for teachers. According to Falah et al (2023), teachers have difficulty updating their knowledge regarding effective English language teaching techniques and methods. In other words, teachers currently need more information regarding how to implement project-based learning in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Currently, primary school English teachers do not have sufficient information on how to design project-based learning in the Merdeka Curriculum. This is reinforced by research conducted by Falah et al (2023), Teachers as subjects in the study said that the dissemination of information about the Merdeka Curriculum was minimal so continuous socialization was needed because not all teachers had the opportunity to be involved, especially English teachers. On the other hand, each teacher's ability to design creative and innovative learning is currently insufficient. According to research conducted by Virgianti et al (2020) the implementation of teachers in Buleleng Regency of instructional strategies in teaching English to young learners shows a low category, this identifies that these teachers cannot design creative and innovative learning activities and prepare interesting learning media. Reinforced by similar findings by Dewi et al (2020) & Dewi et al (2020) related to the implementation of instructional strategies in teaching young learners in Gianyar and Denpasar, showing that teachers have a low implementation in terms of creative and innovative instructional strategies and more often use student worksheets as learning media. Based on previous research, there is a close relationship between the lack of information about the Merdeka Curriculum and the low level of teachers' instructional strategies in designing creative and innovative learning (Irawati et al, 2022; Aeni et al, 2024).

On the other hand, facilities and infrastructure also influence the success of implementing project-based learning. This is supported by the results of research from Friani et al (2017) found that there were problems with tools and materials in the implementation of project-based learning at Public Elementary School 2 Banda Aceh City which affected learning outcomes. Reinforced by the results of research

conducted by Mufidah et al (2020) in the implementation of project-based learning in public special schools in Central Java, the school has limitations in terms of facilities and infrastructure that have an impact on the learning process. Similar findings regarding the lack of facilities in the process of implementing project-based learning methods were found in Bali. According to research conducted by Adnyani et al (2021) found a lack of learning facilities in the implementation of project-based learning in Bali Mandara high schools, which caused obstruction of learning objectives. Based on this, it was found that public schools tend to have limitations related to facilities and infrastructure in the implementation of project-based learning, without the support of appropriate facilities and infrastructure in the learning process it will have an impact on the quality of learning (Nurhandini & Salsabila, 2024).

Currently, many people assume that private schools have better quality than public schools, especially national plus schools. National Plus schools are schools that adopt a major leading curriculum such as Cambridge but also add local subjects (Rinaldi & Saroh, 2016). In this case, National Plus schools use English as a medium of communication in the learning process. On the other hand, the differences in facilities and infrastructure in private schools and public schools also have significant differences. According to Nurhandini & Salsabila (2024), facilities and infrastructure in public schools tend to be uneven which can hinder the learning process and the application of project-based learning.

Additionally, private schools usually have good facilities and infrastructure in meeting the needs of the learning process. It is no secret that private schools have

more expensive tuition fees than public schools, even though public schools are generally free of tuition fees. It can be assumed that by having relatively higher, it can support private schools to be able to provide good quality facilities and infrastructure than public schools.

In Bali, there are many reputable private primary schools. Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School is one of them. It is a national plus school that combines two curricula, the Cambridge Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum and adopts the Montessori learning model. According to Al et al (2012), the Montessori Method calls for free activity in a ready environment meaning that the educational environment can create a space that suits the needs of children at various ages.

Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School is a private elementary school established in 2022. The school is located in Gianyar Regency, Bali. The school, which has an area of 500 m², is sheltered by the Saraswati PR Foundation. Genta Saraswati has 17 teachers, most of them are English teachers. Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School is a national plus school that combines the Cambridge Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum and applies the Montessori learning model, besides that English is the language used as a medium of communication in the learning process.

Based on initial observations, Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School implements Project-based learning as a learning method. In addition, having English teachers with good quality, as well as good quality of

facilities and infrastructure supporting learning causes this school to be chosen for further research on the implementation of project-based learning.

On the other hand, the Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to be more creative in designing learning with one of the recommended methods is project-based learning. Based on this, there is currently an urgency to conduct research that can be used as a reference in implementing project-based learning as a creative and innovative learning method in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Therefore, Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School can be a good source as a teacher reference in adding insight and understanding how to implement project-based learning in teaching English to early learners. This research focuses on how project-based learning is implemented in teaching English to young learners. In addition, this research also investigates the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing project-based learning and the strategies used by teachers to cope these challenges.

1.2 Identification of Problem

The Indonesian government has issued a new curriculum, namely the Merdeka Curriculum, to replace the 2013 Curriculum. In this change, English is taught again at the elementary school level, and one of the characteristics of this curriculum is project-based learning. The problem currently found is the lack of creative and innovative level of teachers in Public Elementary Schools in Bali in designing learning, especially in English classes. Based on previous research, English teachers at the Public elementary school level in Bali tend to use

conventional, monotonous teaching methods that are based on textbooks. On the other hand, currently the Indonesian government is very aggressive in directing teachers to teach using project-based learning as a learning method. However, the implementation of Project-based learning is currently still relatively low. This is caused by several factors such as a lack of information regarding the Merdeka Curriculum and Project-based learning, low levels of teacher creativity and innovation, as well as mismatches in teacher educational backgrounds.

On the other hand, previous research tends to examine the impact of project-based learning as a learning method. It is still very rare for research to discuss further regarding how the implementation of project-based learning as a learning method. This relates on how to properly implement project-based learning, challenges in implementation, and strategies that can be used to overcome these challenges. Research that examines more deeply the implementation of project-based learning is important to provide practical guidance to teachers in order to optimize the implementation of project-based learning.

Based on these problems, this research examined a private elementary school in Bali that implemented project-based learning methods in teaching English to young students in order to provide information and serve as a reference for teachers in designing creative and innovative learning. Based on initial observations, English teachers at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School applied project-based learning methods in teaching English to young students. Therefore, this school was chosen as a place for data collection.

This research further investigated how teachers at this school implemented project-based learning in teaching English in classes 2A and 2B.

1.3 Research Problem

Based on the explanation of the problem above, the research questions in the study are formulated as follows:

1. What is the implementation procedure of Project-Based Learning at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School for teaching English in grades 2A and 2B?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the teacher for teaching English to young learners in grades 2A and 2B in implementing Project Based Learning?
3. What are the teacher strategies to cope with the challenges of implementing Project Based Learning for teaching English to young learners in grades 2A and 2B?

1.4 Purpose of The Study

Based on the discussion of the problems above, the objectives of this study are formulated as follows:

1. To find out the implementation procedure of Project-based learning for teaching English to young learners at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School in grades 2A and 2B.

2. To find out the challenges encountered by the teacher for teaching English to young learners in grades 2A and 2B in implementing Project Based Learning
3. To find out the teacher strategies to cope with the challenges of implementing Project Based Learning for teaching English to young learners in grades 2A and 2B

1.5 Significance of The Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

The researcher hoped that the results of this study could add and expand theories, data, and information in the scientific field regarding the implementation of Project-Based Learning in the learning process, especially regarding the implementation of English language learning for young learners. The researcher also hoped that the results of this research would support the empiricism of the previous research of experts and researchers.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

1) For Teacher

- i. This study is expected to add relevant knowledge and skills for teachers in how to implement project-based learning well in teaching English.
- ii. This study is expected to contribute to improving teachers' abilities and skills in teaching English, especially in teaching English to young learners.

- iii. This study is expected to increase the good performance of teachers in teaching to be more creative, innovative, and wise in choosing teaching methods.

2) For Students

- i. This study is expected to increase students' learning motivation by implementing suitable and fun learning methods.
- ii. This study is expected to improve student learning achievement results in English classes for the better.
- iii. This study is expected to increase activity during the learning period and can maximize students' potential in learning English.

3) For School

The purpose of this study was to help other schools in developing the quality of education, especially in teaching English, understand how important it is to choose teaching strategies that maximize learning outcomes by considering students' needs and characteristics.

4) For Researcher

The results of this study were expected to be a reference for future research, especially in terms of young learners and learning methods in English.

1.6 Scope of The Study

The scope of this study was limited to investigating how teachers at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School implemented project-based learning as

a method of teaching English to young learners and the challenges faced by teachers in implementing project-based learning along with the strategies used by teachers to overcome these challenges.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms used in this study were defined to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of the reader.

1.7.1 Conceptual Definitions

i. Young Learner

According to Bakhsh (2016), young learners are generally defined as children ranging in age from five or six years old who are enrolled in the first year of primary school to twelve years old. In addition, according to Hardi & Rizal (2020) young learners can also be classified by grade rather than by their age alone. Students in the lower grades or level one, consist of students in grades 1, 2, and 3, while in the upper grades, or level two, consist of students in grades 4, 5, and 6. Young learners have different characteristics from adult learners, according to Scott & Ytreberg (1995) young learners have certain characteristics such as a high sense of interest and curiosity towards something, active and like to learn by doing, not yet able to think abstractly but skilled at imitating or modeling, able to learn in an indirect way, talkative and creative with limited vocabulary and grammar, and have a short attention span, such as when playing and learning.

ii. Project-Based Learning

According to Widiyati & Pangesti (2022) Project-based learning is a student-centered learning method by providing experience to solve problems so that it will produce a product as the final result. According to Kimsesiz et al., (2017), the most effective learning principle is learning by doing, and project-based learning supports this. Learning by doing gave young learners the opportunity to explore the talents they had. Additionally, learning by doing prevented the learning process from becoming boring. Based on Fahlevi (2022) the following are the steps in the learning process of implementing Project-based learning namely Start with an essential question, Design a Plan for the Project, Create a Schedule, Monitor the Students and the Progress of the Project, Assess the Outcome, and last Evaluate the Experiences.

1.7.2 Operational Definition

- i. In this study, young learners at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School were defined as children under 14 years old, and in general young learners at this school had similar characteristics to each other according to the theory that has been described.
- ii. Project-based learning was a learning method used by teachers at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School to teach English to young learners. The result of the implementation of project-based learning was expected to improve students' learning outcomes and motivation.

