

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research background, problem identification, research limitations, research questions, the purpose of conducting this research, and the significance of the research. All of these sub-chapters are discussed in the introduction research and are explained as follows:

1.1. Research Background

Indonesia has several types of primary schools, which are divided into four types: public primary schools, private primary schools, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah schools (MI), and international schools. Each of these schools has differences. Public primary schools are under the auspices of the government and are accredited directly by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Public primary schools usually use the national curriculum with the language of instruction in learning using Indonesian. Then, in private primary schools, the curriculum generally uses the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education and Culture, but with some differences, which is usually called the national plus curriculum (Suryadarma, 2014).

The difference in private primary schools is that some subjects are usually combined with the use of English or other foreign language learning methods such as Mandarin. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah schools are under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and use the same curriculum as public schools. The difference is that this madrasah school prioritizes Islamic religious

learning. Unlike private schools, international schools use a curriculum adopted directly from foreign curricula such as the International Baccalaureate Organization and Cambridge International Examination. Because it adopts a foreign curriculum, the language of instruction in international schools also uses full English (Beegle & Bank, 2005). In Bali, these four types of primary schools are scattered across several areas, but international primary schools are only found in areas with high foreign tourist mobility. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) schools are also found in areas with a large Muslim population. Meanwhile, public and private elementary schools are spread out in almost every region of Bali.

The curriculum plays a very important role for schools in determining the implementation and achievement of success in education (Suwandi, 2020). According to Richard (2001), designing a curriculum is not as comprehensive as developing one. It covers the procedures for identifying a group of learners' needs, creating goals and objectives for a program designed to satisfy those needs, choosing a suitable syllabus, course structure, instructional strategies, and teaching resources, and conducting an assessment of the language program that emerges from the procedures.

These days the curriculum in Indonesia has been changed to a new curriculum called the Merdeka curriculum. This curriculum has been implemented since the 2021/2022 school year with the aim of perfecting the previous curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum (Oktavia et al., 2023). In the Merdeka curriculum, there are three policies: First, there is no national exam, which is replaced by a minimum competency assessment and character survey.

Second, simplifying the Learning Implementation Plan. Lastly, the regulations for implementing new student admissions should be rearranged (Daga, 2018). In the Merdeka curriculum, the definition of 'Merdeka' aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's principles, which emphasize free learning to enable students to develop independently and creatively. This freedom is meant to inspire students to learn more and develop their own identities (Ardianti & Amalia, 2022). As a result, it is envisaged that this curriculum led to changes in education that place a greater emphasis on soft skills development and character development driven by competencies.

According to Sjafty et al. (2016), before using the Merdeka curriculum, education in Indonesia used the Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP), then changed back to using the 2013 curriculum. The difference between the KTSP and the 2013 Curriculum is in English learning. English learning in KTSP is compulsory lessons learned by all elementary school students from grade 1 to grade 6 because they are included in *muatan lokal* (*mulok*). Whereas in 2013 Curriculum, English lessons are not included in *mulok*, so schools are not required to implement English language learning. Therefore, some schools implement English language learning, and some schools do not.

In the Merdeka curriculum, English learning is again taught to elementary school students because implementing English language learning in elementary schools is a good policy to accelerate the improvement of students' English skills (Oktavia et al., 2023). Besides that, the English language needs to be studied because English is an international language and

the second language after the mother tongue (Agustin, 2011). English has begun to be taught to young learners since elementary school. English is taught from an early age with the aim of contributing to students' progress in language competence (Wulandari et al., 2020).

When learning a language, young learners have different characteristics from adult learners. Young learners can learn languages well because they have not studied many existing languages. The characteristics of young learners, which are different from adult learners, require that young learners need to be cared for well. They need imaginative and innovative teachers who also have a thorough understanding of the characteristics of young learners (Oktavia et al., 2022). Besides that, according to Fajarina (2017), teachers who teach English to young learners must understand the characteristics and needs of students to make it easier for them to find learning methods that are suitable for young learners. Therefore, they get greater focus when the learning process takes place.

In Bali, many elementary schools still do not have English teachers with English qualifications. The research conducted by Utami (2022) discussed four teachers in one of the elementary schools in Bali who did not have a background in English language education. The research results show that teachers in this public elementary school have challenges teaching English due to their lack of relevant qualifications. The challenges they face include difficulties in providing teaching materials using English fluently. Teachers also have difficulties in designing lessons that can attract students' attention using teaching media, as well as difficulties in using student-centered activities.

Thus, teachers who do not have the appropriate educational qualifications cannot teach English ideally. Without this qualification, most teachers can only rely on simple teaching methods by teaching using traditional methods.

Teaching English in primary schools often involves hiring English teachers without formal training (Utami, 2022). When teaching English to elementary school students, teachers who do not have professional expertise in the subject sometimes have difficulty deciding which teaching materials and strategies to use. In addition, these English teachers usually use easily accessible worksheets. As a result, many teachers still instruct young learners in English using traditional methods, which prevents teachers and students from interacting and communicating so that the learning process focuses on grammar and reading comprehension only (Widiyati & Pangesti, 2022).

As in English language learning in public elementary schools in Bali, which still use traditional teaching methods, the research conducted by Listyariani et al. (2018) at a public primary school in the Jembrana district revealed that three teachers had similar problems. The three teachers still use traditional methods in teaching English and only use LKS as a learning resource because the school does not provide English textbooks. Teachers are still oriented towards LKS, where the teaching material in LKS is limited, so they experience difficulties developing learning activities. The activity that teachers usually give students is doing tasks on the LKS. Teachers at this school also experience difficulties in teaching pronunciation to students. According to the teachers, the written words in English and the spoken words are different. From the results of the researcher's interview with one of the teachers, this

teacher sometimes experienced difficulties mispronouncing several English words because he did not master English pronunciation well. Apart from that, research conducted by Dewi et al. (2020) in three different schools in Denpasar shows that teachers, when teaching English to young learners, always repeat themselves using monotonous learning methods. So, students quickly become bored with repetitive activities such as working on questions on LKS. Teachers also lack the ability to use variations in learning media, which makes students' interest in learning less.

Based on the difficulties experienced by teachers when teaching English to young learners in public elementary schools in Bali, it can be said that the practice of innovative strategies such as PjBL, as suggested by the Merdeka curriculum, is still low. The teacher can use innovative teaching strategies by having students collaborate in groups and work on real-world projects through Project Based Learning, Problem-Based Learning, and Group Work (Paragae, 2023). Based on research conducted by Yuvita et al. (2023), mapping from several articles regarding the PjBL method in learning English, it is revealed that PjBL is a learning model that is one of the effective methods in developing student activity and learning outcomes.

Using the Project Based Learning method is a characteristic of the Merdeka Curriculum. This method is student-centered while being able to train students' independence (Wahyu et al., 2023). Project Based Learning (PjBL) is one of the teaching methods that can be used to teach English to young learners. PjBL is defined as a teaching method that involves student-centered problem-solving activities with a product as a result. This method may result in

presentations, performances, or other tasks (Widiyati & Pangesti, 2022). According to Kimsesiz (2017), young learners must participate more actively in the learning process when Project Based Learning is used as a teaching technique. Therefore, the teacher's role in this process involves leading, directing, providing reinforcement, and assessing pupils. So that the young learners can solve the problem and produce a project using their thinking skills to gain new knowledge. According to Fahlevi (2022) in implementing Project Based Learning, there are several syntaxes can be used: 1) Start with essential question, 2) Design a plan for the project, 3) Create schedule, 4) Monitor the students and the progress of the project, 5) Assess the outcome, 6) Evaluate the experience.

In implementing the Project Based Learning method in English language learning, a few schools still use the PjBL approach in their teaching. Many teachers still use one-sided learning methods that only focus on the teacher using the lecture method, especially in English classes in elementary schools (Novita et al., 2022). This is because teachers who use the Project Based Learning method in teaching their students require much equipment to be prepared, much time to complete the project and get the best results, an understanding of skills between the teacher and students, and adequate supporting facilities (Martati, 2022).

The implementation of Project Based Learning in teaching English in private schools shows positive results. Private schools are superior in terms of very supportive facilities, efforts and caretaking of students and also produce better achievement scores (Ghimire et al., 2020). As found at Genta Saraswati

Bilingual and Montessori School Bali, which has supporting facilities such as spacious classrooms, learning facilities, a library, and learning media that can support the teaching and learning process of students and teachers at school. The quality of adequate school infrastructure, facilities, and infrastructure, as well as the support of learning media to support the learning process, will make it easier for students to improve their learning abilities (Sakellariou, 2017). These supporting learning facilities help students facilitate their thinking process when learning objects. Involvement in the learning process in a complete, comprehensive, and powerful way can help students realize their learning potential optimally (Yustikia, 2019).

Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School Bali is located in Gianyar Regency, Bali, and has become one of the Montessori and private primary schools in Gianyar. Established in 2022, this school uses the Merdeka Curriculum and collaborates with the Cambridge Curriculum, which adds some subjects using English, such as Mathematics in English, Health and Physical Education, and others. As a school with a national plus curriculum, Genta Saraswati uses the Montessori learning model, which emphasizes student-centered learning so that students have the freedom to learn in class. From the results of pre-observation with the principal at the Genta Saraswati school, Montessori schools have the meaning of providing freedom for learners to determine their growth and development. According to Masyrofah (2017), Montessori is a learning method developed by Dr. Maria Montessori. It is defined as a program for early education that makes children learn well in an environment appropriate to stimulate and make it easier for children to absorb

their cognitive abilities in the environment. In this Montessori method, children can choose the tasks or activities they think have meaning and purpose. In addition, this school uses two languages, namely English and Indonesian, as the communication medium in the learning process.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher focuses on the implementation of Project Based Learning (PjBL) in grades 1A and 1B at Genta Saraswati Bilingual & Montessori School Bali. This research only used grade 1 because the researcher wants to focus on very young learners. Apart from that, they are also just learning foreign languages, especially English. The researcher also used Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School because this school implemented PjBL to teach English to young learners. Hence, this study aims to see the implementation procedure of Project Based Learning in teaching English to young learners, as well as investigates the challenges encountered by the teacher in implementing PjBL and the strategies used to cope with the challenges.

1.2. Identification of Problem

In teaching English to young learners, it is necessary to have English teachers who understand the teaching methods and strategies appropriate for achieving learning objectives. However, most elementary school teachers are English teachers who do not have the appropriate qualifications, making them unable to teach English ideally (Oktavia et al., 2023; Utami, 2022). This makes teachers less innovative in choosing learning methods, which causes traditional learning methods to continue to be used. The use of traditional learning

methods quickly makes students feel bored because this method is teacher-centered. In addition, the traditional method also has limited learning materials because it only relies on books. Hence, teachers are less likely to use variations in learning media, which makes students less interested in learning (Dewi et al., 2020; Listyariani et al., 2018).

The Merdeka curriculum is currently the latest curriculum implemented in Indonesia. This curriculum emphasizes innovative learning whereas the Project Based Learning method is a characteristic of the Merdeka curriculum. There are differences in implementing this PjBL method in private and public schools. In terms of facilities, private schools are superior in terms of having modern facilities, complete facilities and infrastructure, and learning materials that follow international standards (Sakellariou, 2017). In private schools, finances are more secure and very supportive for the smooth running of the student learning process. Unlike private schools, public schools experience financial constraints, where public schools have limited funds, which cannot optimally support teachers' professional development to enhance their knowledge of the application of PjBL (Yustikia, 2019). Besides that, limited funds also impact the school's ability to meet its needs, which results in school programs that cannot be implemented, such as holding seminars or workshops for teachers on innovative teaching methods like PjBL in the Merdeka curriculum (Nurrochman et al., 2023; Suroso & Arifin, 2023). Based on this, teachers usually use simple learning methods in teaching English and only focus on students' learning outcomes (Widiyati & Pangesti, 2022).

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that teachers with the appropriate qualifications are needed in classroom teaching, especially in teaching English, so the learning process runs well. Innovative learning methods are also needed to support learning and improve student knowledge. PjBL is one of the innovative learning methods in the current Merdeka curriculum. However, in implementing the PjBL method, many teachers still think it requires a lot of money even though teachers can adjust it to the conditions in their respective schools. Due to the lack of understanding and readiness of teachers to use this method, more in-depth research is needed regarding the implementation of the PjBL method.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher focuses on the implementation of Project Based Learning in teaching English to young learners in grades 1A and 1B. This research was conducted in private primary schools in Bali, namely Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School Bali. In addition to focusing on the implementation of PjBL, this study also discusses the challenges experienced by teachers and the strategies used to cope with these challenges. Therefore, this study aims to be a reference for English teachers in implementing the Project Based Learning method properly.

1.3. Research Questions

Based on the problem identification above, the research questions for this study are formulated as follows:

1. What is the implementation procedure of Project Based Learning at Genta Saraswati Bilingual & Montessori School?

2. What are the challenges encountered by the teacher in implementing Project Based Learning at Genta Saraswati Bilingual & Montessori School?
3. What are the strategies to cope with the challenges of implementing Project Based Learning at Genta Saraswati Bilingual & Montessori School?

1.4. Research Objectives

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 at Genta Saraswati Bilingual & Montessori School.
2. To find out the challenges encountered by the teacher in implementing Project Based Learning at Genta Saraswati Bilingual & Montessori School.
3. To find out the strategies to cope with the challenges of implementing Project Based Learning at Genta Saraswati Bilingual & Montessori School.

1.5. Research Significant

1.5.1. Theoretical Significance

- a) This study is expected to contribute as a supporting reference source for further research.

- b) This study is expected to increase other researchers' interest in studying English language learning, especially in teaching English to young learners.

1.5.2. Practical Significance

a. For Teachers

- a) This study is expected to add relevant insights and knowledge for teachers about implementing Project-Based Learning in teaching English to young learners.
- b) This study is expected to improve teachers' abilities and skills in teaching English, especially in teaching English to young learners.
- c) This study is expected to increase the excellent performance of teachers in teaching and help them be more creative, innovative, and wise in choosing teaching methods.

b. For Students

- a) This study is expected to increase students' motivation by implementing suitable and fun learning methods.
- b) This study is expected to improve student learning achievement results in English classes.
- c) This study is expected to increase activity during the learning period and can maximize students' potential in learning English.

c. For School

This study is expected to be a guideline for other schools in improving teacher competence, especially for English teachers. It is important to select teaching methods that suit the needs and characteristics of students, especially in teaching English, to create maximum learning outcomes.

d. For Researchers

This study is expected to be a reference for other researchers in future research especially in implementing the PjBL method in learning English.

1.6. Research Scope

The scope of this study is limited to investigating how teachers at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori School Bali implement Project Based Learning as a method of teaching English to young learners and the challenges experienced by the teachers in implementing Project Based Learning as well as the strategies used to cope with the challenges.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

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

1.7.1. Conceptual Definition

a) Young Learners

Young learners are children who are just starting to begin the educational process. Young learners are still learning about

something that interests them, unlike adult learners. Young learners have special qualities, such as a sharp brain that is still clean, quick, and responsive. Some of these qualities are also frequently attractive. Young students typically always do as they like and want to. Many researchers state that young learners are those under the age of twelve. According to Scooth and Lisbeth in Fajarina (2017), young learners are kids under eleven. Hardi & Rizal (2020), also state that young learners were divided into two groups: the younger group and the older group. The younger group begins at age 6–8, while the older group begins at age 9–12.

b) Project Based Learning

According to Widiyati & Pangesti (2022), Project Based Learning (PjBL) is a student-centered teaching method that involves students in problem-solving experiences with a product as the final result. Suciani in Puspa Rineksiane (2022) is an approach to learning that uses engaging classroom activities to encourage students' critical thinking. Students are asked to investigate the provided case. As part of their learning objectives, students are also required to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize data in a variety of ways.

1.7.2. Operational Definition

- a) In this study, young learners at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School Bali are defined as children under 12.
- b) Project Based Learning is a method used by English teachers at Genta Saraswati Bilingual and Montessori Primary School Bali

to teach English to young learners. The use of this method is expected to have a good impact on young learners' learning outcomes.

