

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses general information related to research such as research background, problem identification, research question, research objectives, significance of study, scope of the study, and key term definition.

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The Merdeka Curriculum places English as one of the subjects or fields of study given at the primary school level from Grade 1 to Grade VI (Eka et al., 2023). This is causes English needs to be introduced early because the earlier children are introduced to the target language, especially English, the faster and better their language acquisition (Ratminingsih et al., 2020). English also enhances intellect because learning a language that differs from our native language promotes brain intelligence growth, especially for children. This is a great stimulus for children to study English as a foreign language during its golden era (Putra, 2020). Children between the ages of 3 and 12 years are a golden age or critical period. (Ratminingsih et al., 2020). All aspects of language use must be introduced to children before this golden age ends. At this age, it is crucial to introduce the correct way of speaking because the use of the correct language is useful to communicate with his environment (Arumsari et al., 2017).

Children between the ages of 3 to 11 are generally considered young learners. Hardi & Rizal (2020) stated that young learners can be divided into two groups based on their age, the *Younger Group* ranges from 6 to 8 years old, and the *Older Group* ranges from 9 to 12 years old. Young learners are active thinkers who like to learn things including learning languages by doing. Based on the level, the lower class consists of children in grades 1,2,3, while the upper class consists of children in grades 4,5, and 6. According to Kusmaryati (2020), young learners are very interested in learning or gaining understanding from direct experience through objects and visual aids because they will comprehend more if they learn by doing.

There are many benefits of learning English for young learners. Learning English is not just about mastering the language, but also about opening up opportunities to interact widely with the rest of the world. This helps the younger generation to be better prepared to face global challenges, both in education and career, without forgetting their own cultural identity. In other words, English serves as a bridge that connects them with the times and science (Ramadhani, 2022)

Therefore, the demands of children's education, especially in learning English, are a consideration in Indonesia. The demands of education are one of the factors in curriculum adjustment in this country. According to Zainuri (2018) stated a curriculum refers to a document that contains a formulation of objectives, teaching materials, teaching and learning activities, schedules, and evaluations. In this line, Sari (2022) pointed out the curriculum is an educational reference.

In the past, Indonesia implemented the 2013 Curriculum. The education policy was conveyed through the Deputy Minister of Education and Culture in 2013 that stated Elementary Schools are not allowed to hold English learning (Sya & Helmanto, 2020). In the 2013 Curriculum, English is one of the compulsory subjects at the national secondary education level, namely Junior High

School (SMP) and Senior High School (SMA), while English is only a local content at the elementary school level (Setiawan, 2021). On the other hand, the 2013 Curriculum eliminates English learning at the elementary school level. This causes English teachers in elementary schools to become victims of this policy because they do not have teaching hours while students do not have a basis for learning English (Alfarisy, 2021).

Other studies stated that the 2013 Curriculum explained that English subjects are not removed, but also not mandatory for every elementary school. English subjects are not included in the group of compulsory, local content, or extracurricular subjects. Therefore, the position of English subjects at the primary school level is unclear. Technically, English subjects are left to each school, this results in differences in implementation and gaps in the application of English in each elementary school (Ardaya et al., 2022). Some primary schools continue to include English in their curriculum, while others do not include English in their curriculum at all (Maili & Hestingsih, 2017). The schools were allowed to choose whether or not to teach English as an extracurricular. The fact that English is not taught in primary schools has left a void for teachers with English teaching skills in primary schools (Oktavia et al., 2023). However, it is still possible to teach if it is required in a certain situation. For example, several elementary schools, especially in Bali, provide English subjects for students. It is considering Bali has become an international tourism destination where everybody requires proficiency in English. Additionally, English proficiency might facilitate work opportunities in the tourist industry (Virgianti et al., 2020).

To meet the needs that exist in the world of education, especially the application of English language learning, the curriculum is always updated regularly. Since the 2021/2022 school year, the Minister of Education has issued a new policy regarding the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum that replaces the previous curriculum, which is the 2013 Curriculum. Several essential

things are emphasized in the Merdeka Curriculum, especially the Merdeka Curriculum at the primary school level. One of the things that is emphasized is that English is an elective subject taught in elementary schools (Oktavia et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum embraces the principle of freedom of learning. As the name implies, freedom of learning is freedom of thought for teachers and students. This curriculum can shape the character of students and teachers because they can freely explore skills, knowledge, and attitudes from the environment (Rusmiati et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility for teachers to choose learning tools that suit the needs and characteristics of students. This allows teachers to develop learning that is more creative and innovative and can be tailored to the needs and interests of students (Zulkarnaen et al., 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum has its characteristics when compared to other curricula, namely the emphasis on the application of a learning method that is student-centered and can train students' independence, namely the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model (Fahlevi, 2022). The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum focuses on project activities that help develop students' soft skills and character (Pouw & Mulyanti, 2023). Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a student-centered teaching model by involves students in problem-solving experiences with products as the final result (Widiyati & Pangesti, 2022). Students will not only sit in class and read books with this model, but they will also collaborate and practice problem-solving abilities (Almulla, 2020).

Project-based learning is a learning model that provides students with essential strategies for success in the 21st Century. According to Battele for Kids, 2019; Gelen, 2018 (as cited in Lastriyani et al. (2023), the demands for student competencies to keep up with the times according to 21st-century learning include learning and innovative skills, knowledge, media and technology skills, and life and career skills. The ability to learn and innovative skills is an ability that includes critical

thinking, creativity, communication, and cooperation. The ability of knowledge, media, and technology skills is the ability that students must master in adapting to the development of information technology. The ability of life and career skills is the ability of students to determine their future in the future.

Project-based Learning (PjBL) in elementary schools brings a new dynamic into the classroom, replacing conventional learning models with immersive, project-oriented experiences. The basic concept of PjBL is to enable students to learn through projects that reflect real-world situations, where they not only absorb information but also apply it practically (Dian et.al, 2023 as cited in Sumilat et al., 2023). Project-Based Learning is a learning model that emphasizes projects that take the form of complicated activities based on challenging inquiries or problems (Sutomo et al., 2021). In this process, students are directed to become researchers, planners, and implementers of their projects (Jayanti, 2023).

The implementation of PjBL in primary schools introduces project-based elements that stimulate children's natural curiosity, encourage collaboration among classmates, and help them understand the connection between the concepts learned and the real world (Akbar et al., 2023). The application of Project-Based Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum can help encourage the creativity of early childhood or young learners by providing real tasks that provide challenges for students related to daily life (Zulkarnaen et al., 2023).

There have been many studies related to the effectiveness of implementing PjBL in learning. Such as the study conducted by Almulla (2020) stated that Project-Based Learning can significantly improve student involvement in the English learning process by allowing for the exchange of knowledge and information gathered through discussions and learning processes that focus on the achievement of outcomes. Other studies conducted by Yuliansyah & Ayu (2021)

resulted in the implementation of the project-based learning model has been effective. This model has been proven to help students learn English by increasing students' motivation to learn and improving students' ability to solve problems to develop their critical thinking. Based on the study carried out by Suteja & Setiawan (2022), Project-Based Learning models have implications for improving learning activities, fostering students to participate in both scientific and thinking activities to ensure students acquire more knowledge and valuable experience throughout the learning process. In this line, the study conducted by Puangpungsi (2021) showed that PjBL improves English language competence and aids in the development of 21st-century skills. Project-based activities encouraged students to build collaborative and cooperative skills, adaptability and flexibility, and increased areas of responsibility in learning.

Until now, there have been many studies conducted on the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) implementation. However, the research focus on how the teachers' procedure to implement Project-Based Learning, especially at the primary school level in Bali is still relatively minimal evidence and has not yet been qualitatively explored how this is implemented in practice. Further, teachers in public primary schools in Indonesia face various challenges in implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL). Wardhani et al. (2023) found that the main problems include lack of continuous training, lack of support from the school, limited resources and facilities, and difficulties in designing projects that fit the curriculum and actively involve all students. Research conducted by Sumilat et al. (2023) also showed that barriers such as lack of training, limited resources, and resistance to changing traditional methods were obstacles for teachers. Dewi (2022) noted that although PjBL can improve students' critical thinking and collaborative skills, the main challenges are limited time, resources, and resistance from some teachers who are still comfortable with conventional methods. Imaduddin et al. (2021) identified barriers such as teachers' lack of

understanding of PjBL, limited facilities and support from schools, and the need for additional training for teachers. In addition, the success of PjBL relies heavily on teachers' ability to design projects that are interesting and appropriate for students. Rusmiati et al. (2023) also added that many teachers do not fully understand the learning model that is based on independent learning, lack teacher innovation in the learning process, teachers have not been able to develop students' creativity as expected, and inadequate school facilities. This also was supported by Amin & Syahnaidi (2023) that stated many teachers are not willing to innovate and be creative to make ideal and fun learning. So, the English learning process cannot be carried out effectively, even inviting boredom for students. Because teachers only rely on the material in the book and teach it only as much as they can.

Considering these issues, the focus of this research is to find out how good practices are in the implementation of Project-Based Learning at the elementary school level. The criteria in this study are elementary schools that implement Project-Based Learning, have qualified teachers, and have adequate facilities, especially in project making. Based on these criteria, this research was conducted in International private elementary schools because according to Lestari et al. (2022), international standard schools can be said to be a form of government effort in boosting the quality of education in Indonesia. In addition, international schools have qualified students and teachers, so it is possible to make innovations and breakthroughs both in the field of technology and other fields. In this line, Perwita & Widuri (2023) stated the quality of education is highly dependent on the environment or facilities of the educational institution itself. Private schools typically accommodate growth by adding new buildings or by adding facilities tailored to support learning needs. In addition, the private schools produce better teachers than public schools.

One of the schools that meets these criteria is Pelangi School. Pelangi School is a private, non-profit school established in 2006 and located in Ubud, Bali. Pelangi School is a well-known international standard school that offers a high level of education to its multicultural student body. In addition, Pelangi School uses the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) combined with the Indonesian National Curriculum which is the Merdeka Curriculum and taught by teaching teams of highly qualified International and Indonesian teachers. The International Primary Curriculum (IPC) helps children aged 5-11 learn in a fun and relevant way so that they are prepared to become competent, caring individuals and contribute positively to the world. Pelangi School also implementing Project-Based Learning in its learning process. This research raises the issue of implementing project-based learning in grades 3 and 4 because according to Hardi & Rizal (2020), grade 3 includes to Lower Class and grade 4 includes to Upper Class. This research is expected to find out how to implement PjBL that is appropriate for the lower class, especially in grade 3, and in the upper class especially in grade 4.

## **1.2. Identification Problem**

There are still many teachers or educators who use inappropriate methods when in the learning process so the ability to innovate and actively learn students is still low. Looking at the reality in the field, there are still many learning systems that use conventional learning such as lectures which are considered monotonous and boring, even though at the elementary level they need a more varied learning system so that it is not monotonous (Amin & Syahnaidi, 2023). In addition, there are still many teachers who do not understand the Merdeka Curriculum and how to implement it in teaching so they do not fully understand the appropriate learning model such as Project-Based Learning. It is also mentioned that there are still schools that do not have teachers



who can teach English (Oktavia et al., 2023). Many English instructors in Bali's primary schools do not have any kind of formal English education. Moreover, since there is no set English syllabus, many English teachers usually teach English utilizing a worksheet book accessible at the bookshop (Utami, 2022). Regarding this problem, this research was conducted in one of the international elementary schools in Bali, namely Pelangi School. This is because Pelangi School uses a combination of the IPC curriculum and the Indonesian national curriculum, namely the Merdeka Curriculum. The school has high-quality teachers and implements innovative learning, one of which is the implementation of Project-Based Learning. Apart from the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum, this is a school policy for project implementation because, in the IPC curriculum, there are many student activities in making projects.

Based on previous studies related to the implementation of Project-Based Learning more referring to the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning, there is still little empirical evidence related to details on how to implement Project-Based Learning properly. In addition, there has not been much research related to how to implement good Project-Based Learning that is carried out in a descriptive qualitative manner, especially at the elementary level in lower grades such as grades 3 and 4.

Regarding this issue, this study is very important to find out the details of how to implement Project-Based Learning, and a study is needed, namely by carrying out a qualitative descriptive study in international private elementary schools. This aims to inspire and influence other schools and teachers to implement innovative learning, one of which is by implementing Project-Based Learning well to increase creativity, and critical thinking, and increase student collaboration so that learning is more meaningful and students learn in real life from their experiences when creating projects.

### 1.3. Research Questions

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

- a) How are the implementation procedures of Project-Based Learning in English Learning in Grades 3 and 4 at Pelangi School Bali?
- b) What are the challenges encountered by the teacher in implementing Project-Based Learning in English Lesson Grades 3 and 4 at Pelangi School Bali?
- c) What are the strategies to cope with the challenges of implementing Project-Based learning in English Lesson Grades 3 and 4 at Pelangi School Bali?

### 1.4. Research Objectives

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

- a) To find out the implementation procedures of Project-Based Learning in English Class Grade 3 and 4 at Pelangi School Bali.
- b) To investigate the challenges encountered by the teacher in implementing Project-Based Learning in English Grades 3 and 4 at Pelangi School Bali.
- c) To find out the strategies to cope with the challenges of implementing Project-Based learning in English cl grades 3 and 4 at Pelangi School Bali.

## **1.5. Significance of Study**

### **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 the field of English language learning, especially in teaching English to young learners.
- c) This study used the theory of Project-Based Learning syntax by Fahlevi (2022), namely starting with essential questions, designing a plan, making a schedule, monitoring students and their progress, assessing the outcome, and evaluating the experience.

### **1.5.2 Practical Significance**

#### **A. For Teacher**

- a) This study is expected to add relevant insights and knowledge for teachers on how to implement project-based learning well in teaching English.
- b) This study is expected to contribute to improving teachers' abilities and skills in teaching English, especially in teaching English to young learners.
- c) This study is expected to increase the good performance of teachers in teaching to be more creative, innovative, and wise in choosing teaching methods.

#### **B. For Students**

- a) This study is expected to increase students' learning motivation by implementing suitable and fun learning methods.

- b) This study is expected to improve student learning achievement results in English classes for the better.
- 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 English teachers, the importance of selecting teaching methods that suit the needs and characteristics of students, especially in teaching English, will create maximum learning outcomes.

### **D. For Researchers**

This study is expected to contribute as a reference for other researchers in future research.

## **1.6. Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is limited to investigating how teachers implement Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as a model of teaching English to young learners and the challenges end counter by the teacher in implementing PjBL and also the strategies to cope with the challenges of implementing PjBL in English lessons in grades 3 and 4 at Pelangi School Bali.

## 1.7. Definition of Key Terms

### 1.7.1 Conceptual Definition

#### A. Young Learners

According to Cambridge English, young learners are children in the first six years of formal education, aged 6 to 12 years (Cambridge Assessment, 2019). Hardi & Rizal (2020) stated that young learners can be divided into two groups based on their age, the *Younger Group* ranges from 6 to 8 years old, and the *Older Group* ranges from 9 to 12 years old. Young learners are active thinkers who like to learn things including learning languages by doing. Based on the level, the lower class consists of children in grades 1,2,3. While, the upper class consists of children in grades 4,5, and 6.

#### B. Project-Based Learning

According to Widiyati & Pangesti (2022), Project-based learning (PjBL) is a student-centered teaching method by involves students in problem-solving experiences with a product as the final result. Project-based learning can significantly improve student involvement in the English learning process by allowing for the exchange of knowledge and information gathered via discussions and learning processes that focus on the achievement of outcomes (Almulla, 2020).

#### C. Operational Definition

- a) In this study, young learners at Pelangi School Bali in grades 3 and 4 are defined as children under 12 years old.

- b) Project-based learning is a method used by English teachers at Pelangi School Bali in grades 3 and 4 to teach English to young learners. The use of this method is expected to have a good impact on young learners' learning outcomes.

