

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates background of the study, problem identification, statement of the problems, research objectives, research significances, as well as scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The existence of nature-based schools is still underrated regardless of its strengths for students' growth and positive improvement, especially young learners (Purnamasari & Fauziah, 2019). As children connect directly with nature, they obtain more possibilities and challenges to explore with their own abilities. Besides, when children are introduced to nature, their appreciation and eagerness to preserve nature will tend to be stimulated. It results in enhancing positive impacts in long-term for children. It is also considered that children's academic and practical skills will be improved as they learn and feel comfortable with natural environment (Purnamasari & Fauziah, 2019). Due to these reasons, nature-based learning can be said have a positive impact in learning for young learners, including in learning English.

Nufus (2018) considers that teaching English for young learners should aim at attracting them to think, play, and communicate with the language, not to force them know the forms and language structures. Teaching young learners means teachers have to encourage them to integrate skills and provide content-based as well as experiential approach. Besides, it is an obligatory to create fun and positive

learning environment (Imaniah & Nargis, 2017). If the theory of Piaget as cited by Cameron (2001) is taken into consideration, young learners have the ability to create their own learning by engaging with their surround environment and exploration. Cameron (2001) relates the concern of Jean Piaget in terms of children's development and the world surrounds them. It is in line with the statement of Harmer (2007) in which children learn and construct their understanding based on what they see, hear, touch, and interact with. The process of learning occurs when children interact with their surroundings and solve the problems found in their environment. Consequently, exposing children to nature and their surrounding can help them learn English better as they are naturally curious and enthusiastic. They are eager to explore their surroundings to gain more experiences. Furthermore, since they are physically active, it is appropriate to encourage them to learn various things by benefiting nature, including learning English (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015).

According to North American Association for Environmental Education (2017), the popularity of nature-based learning in the United States has shown significant increase. Based on a national survey in 2017, there are more than 250 nature-based school in 43 states in the U.S. with more than 10,000 children enrolled every year. Moreover, eight out of ten programs have reported their waiting list since 2016. It indicates the increasing interests of educators in implementing nature-based learning although in Indonesia, especially Bali, this type of education is still hidden.

There were only limited studies found in regards to the implementation of nature-based learning in teaching English. Most of the studies focused on

comparing between nature-based schools and traditional schools. One of which was conducted by Cordiano et al. (2019). The aims of their study were to obtain better understanding about the comparison between nature-based learning program and traditional program in pre-school context. It was found that both programs were able to prepare children to continue their education in terms of their social-emotional, academic and pretend play skills. Nevertheless, a difference was found in the rating of teachers in regards to several specific variables. In Indonesian context, a study related to nature-based learning was conducted by (Purnamasari & Fauziah, 2019). In their study, the objective was to examine the standards of educators, curriculum, facilities and infrastructure of a nature-based kindergarten in Bantul, Yogyakarta. The differences of the standards compared to traditional schools were found. These included strengthening curriculum of the school into more environmentally friendly.

The study conducted by Cordiano et al. (2019) and Purnamasari and Fauziah (2019) provided deep insight in regards to how nature-based schools are compared to traditional schools. Both of the study agreed that nature-based learning is able to prepare children to continue their education without eliminating the essence of traditional school standards. However, a deep understanding from the real implementation of nature-based learning at schools has not been highlighted yet, especially from the sides of teachers who are responsible for the teaching and learning process. Moreover, both of the studies describe how the teaching and learning process occurred in the natural context using natural resources. The present study, however, examines the strategies implemented by teachers to continue nature-based learning in a challenging context.

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 occurring at the moment, the teaching and learning processes are impacted into experiencing a big shift. Schools are temporarily closed to prevent the spread of the virus in school environment. As a result, emergency remote teaching is obligatory to be conducted (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). In this case, face-to-face meetings at schools are changed into online learning. It allows students to study from home with fully absence of physical contacts with teachers and friends. Online learning is the only way of continuing teaching and learning process. It is seen as the safest way to transfer knowledge to the students during the pandemic. However, it has weaknesses and limitation that force teachers, students and parents to cooperate in order to conduct a conducive distance teaching and learning process. Therefore, teachers must implement teaching strategies that are able not only to teach the students, but also maintain the essence of the education, in this case, nature-based learning.

In Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia, there are not many schools that focus on children's language development and their personal growth. Trihita Alam Eco School is one of international schools that implements nature-based learning combined with the implementation of play-based learning. As cited in Balispirit.com, Trihita Alam Eco School is one of the best and most unique schools in Bali due to its education system. As it is seen from the name, Trihita Alam Eco School was formed using the foundation of Balinese Hindu Philosophy, namely Tri Hita Karana in which it is the three connections in harmony with God, others, and nature. This school emphasizes the connection of students and nature as its main philosophy. Although it is an international school, there are many local and foreign students whose first language is not English enroll in this school. It is due to the

reason that English is used as the language of instruction although it is also taught as a subject in the classroom. As a result, this school is not only known by its nature-based learning, but also by the way English is taught through integration with nature.

Due to this issue, Trihita Alam Eco School teachers were expected to be able to maintain nature-based learning through online teaching as the essence of this school is the connection between learning and nature. Furthermore, this study was considered as a case study due to the uniqueness of education system in Trihita Alam Eco School in which it implemented nature-based learning, not only to teach young learners in general but also to teach English. The study focused on elaborating challenges and strategies of nature-based school teachers in maintaining nature-based learning in teaching English for young learners during COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Problem Identification

As stated in the background of the study, young learners have to be exposed to nature as they possess an ability to learn through exploration and engaging environment. In the face-to-face meetings, learning activities and processes were done directly both with the teachers and the children in nature by introducing and bringing children to be closer to nature. Moreover, the learning media used were natural materials (Purnamasari & Fauziah, 2019). Due to COVID-19 outbreak, however, young learners were not allowed to go to school. It brought big impacts to nature-based schools as teachers had to adapt with the new way of teaching while maintaining the essence of the education. Thus, it was crucial to examine how

Trihita Alam Eco School maintains nature-based learning to teach English for your learners during COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3 Statement of the Problems

Based on the explanation above, the research problem, therefore, can be formulated as follows.

- 1) What are the internal challenges faced by nature-based school teachers in maintaining nature-based learning in teaching English for young learners during COVID-19 pandemic and what strategies were taken by the teachers in coping up with the internal challenges?
- 2) What are the external challenges faced by nature-based school teachers in maintaining nature-based learning in teaching English for young learners during COVID-19 pandemic and what strategies were taken by the teachers in coping with the external challenges?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are in accordance with the formulated research questions. Therefore, the objectives are as follows:

- 1) To elaborate internal challenges faced and the strategies implemented by teachers at Trihita Alam Eco School in maintaining nature-based learning in teaching English for young learners during COVID-19 pandemic
- 2) To elaborate external challenges faced and the strategies implemented by teachers at Trihita Alam Eco School in maintaining nature-based learning in teaching English for young learners during COVID-19 pandemic

1.5 Significance of the Study

The concern of the study is to describe how teachers of Trihita Alam Eco School are able to maintain nature-based learning as well as face the challenges occurring in teaching English for young learners during COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the study are expected to contribute to both theoretical and practical significances.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, the findings of the study were expected to support the theories of English language teaching, especially in regards to nature-based learning and school concepts (Cordiano et al., 2019; Larimore, 2016, 2019). It would be beneficial by providing real implementation, challenges, and strategies of teachers in implementing nature-based learning and school concepts although the study was conducted in the setting of global pandemic. The study would also be beneficial to support the theory of teaching English for young learners (Cameron, 2001; Linse & Nunan, 2005) in regards to the characteristics of young learners and activities that could be implemented by teachers in teaching even in online learning setting. Furthermore, it could also support and enrich the theory of online learning (Ally, 2008; Boettcher & Conrad, 2010; Gudea, 2008) especially in terms of the challenges and strategies done by the teachers to teach young learners in the online learning setting. Furthermore, the findings were expected to provide empirical evidence for future studies of similar topic as there are only limited studies concerning nature-based learning in teaching English for young learners.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

Practically, the study was expected to provide some information for other schools, especially for teachers, about how to maintain the essence of education during a tough situation. It would also be useful for parents to make them understand that the essence of the education would remain the same although the way of teaching is changing. For future researchers, the data and results of this study could be used as references in conducting similar study. As the study regarding nature-based learning was still limited, this study was also expected to contribute an insight of how education was conducted in an international nature-based school.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study was limited on elaborating internal and external challenges and strategies of nature-based school teachers in maintaining nature-based learning in teaching English for K1 students during COVID-19 pandemic which required the teaching and learning processes to be conducted online to limit physical contacts. The concepts of nature-based learning used the theory of Finch and Bailie (2015) as well as Schweitzer and Gionfra (2018). The concepts were used as consideration whether the challenges and strategies found were in line with nature-based learning.