

**REVEALING THE PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO  
YOUNG LEARNERS**

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**Abstrak**

Meningkatnya pentingnya bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa universal telah menjadikan pengajaran bahasa Inggris kepada pelajar muda sebagai prioritas penting dalam lingkungan pendidikan di seluruh dunia. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui praktik dan tantangan pengajaran bahasa Inggris kepada pelajar muda (TEYL) di sekolah dasar di SD Anak Sholeh Full Day Sitiarjo. Kemudian, penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjawab tujuan yang berkaitan dengan permasalahan tersebut, yaitu: (1) Untuk mengetahui praktik pengajaran bahasa Inggris kepada pelajar muda di sekolah dasar, dan (2) Untuk mengetahui tantangan pengajaran bahasa Inggris kepada pelajar muda di sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, angket, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen. Kuesioner dibagikan kepada 2 guru dan 30 siswa kelas V berdasarkan wilayah. Dua guru dari SD Anak Sholeh Full Day Sitiarjo dipilih untuk berpartisipasi dalam kuesioner dan investigasi penerapan TEYL serta tantangannya di sekolah. Data ditriangulasi dan dianalisis secara deskriptif untuk mengkaji praktik dan tantangan TEYL di sekolah dasar. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara kebijakan pemerintah dan aktualisasi pengajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar. Penerapan TEYL di sekolah dasar bentuknya bermacam-macam, seperti muatan lokal dan ekstrakurikuler. Dalam hal perencanaan, proses, dan evaluasi TEYL di sekolah, karena tidak adanya pengawasan pemerintah, guru mempunyai kewenangan sendiri untuk merancang kurikulum di sekolahnya. Wawancara mengungkapkan banyak tantangan dalam penerapan TEYL karena perbedaan kompetensi guru, fasilitas sekolah, lingkungan dan paparan bahasa Inggris. Studi ini juga memberikan beberapa saran mengenai beberapa kemungkinan implementasi terbaik TEYL di sekolah dasar seperti kebijakan pemerintah terhadap pengajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar, pelatihan guru, komunitas guru bahasa Inggris dan lingkungan bahasa Inggris.

**Kata Kunci:** Praktek, Tantangan, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris kepada Pembelajar Muda, dan Pembelajar Muda

**Abstract**

*The increasing significance of English as a universal language has made teaching English to young learners an essential priority in educational settings across the*

*globe. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the practices and challenges of teaching English to young learners (TEYL) at primary schools in SD Anak Sholeh Full Day Sitarjo. Then, this study is expected to answer the objectives that are related with the problems, those are: (1) To find out the practices of teaching English to young learners in primary school, and (2) To find out the challenges of teaching English to young learners in primary school. The research adopted a case study research design. Data were collected from observation, questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The questionnaires were distributed to 2 teachers and 30 students from fifth grade based on the territory. Two teachers from SD Anak Sholeh Full day Sitarjo were selected to participate in the questionnaires and in the investigation of TEYL implementation and its challenges at schools. The data were triangulated and analysed descriptively to examine the practices and challenges of TEYL in primary schools. The findings revealed a discrepancy between the government policy and the actualization of English teaching at primary schools. The implementation of TEYL at primary schools takes various forms, such as a local content and an extracurricular. In terms of planning, process, and evaluation of TEYL at schools, due to the absence of government supervision, teachers have their own authorities to design the curriculums in their schools. Interviews reveal many challenges in implementing TEYL due to the different teachers' competencies, school facilities, English environment and exposure. The study also provides some suggestions on some possible best implementation for TEYL at primary schools such as government policy towards English teaching at primary schools, teachers' training, English teachers' community and English environment.*

**Keywords:** *Practices, Challenges, Teaching English to Young Learner, and Young Learners*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Teaching English has become a big problem in countries where English is not their language (Marques & Xavier, 2020). Therefore, they need to learn phrases from textbooks and not from the environment. In addition, teachers often look for practical strategies to reduce the difficulty of teaching English and face many challenges also often have questions about the best way to teach (Lestari, 2011). In many countries around the world, English is now becoming a compulsory subject in primary education. However, the curriculum and practices are common and vary from country to country depending on the decision of education sector (Cimen, 2021).

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) at the primary school level in Indonesia was started in the 1994 curriculum (Law of the Indonesian Ministry of Education number 060/U/1993). According to Garton et al (2013), English can be taught in primary schools as

local content. However, English could be taught as an extracurricular. In reality, some schools still conducted English in the intra curriculum. It means that English was taught as local content.

Teachers of English in primary or secondary schools who become the big player beyond this reality will carry out a harder work. At the same time, to run their profession as the teacher of young learners, English teachers in primary or secondary schools might face some significant challenges. Widya and Rahayu (2016) explain that cognitive development, motivation, attention, multi-level groups, and assessment are the challenges in TEYL. Therefore, there was also a result from the interview with English teachers about the problem they face in teaching EYL that assessment is one of them. In short, there are five main challenges that might be encountered by English teachers of young learners.

Those challenges are in terms of cognitive development, motivation, attention, multilevel groups, and assessment. The first challenge is cognitive development. Widya & Rahayu, 2016 explain that young learners are in the middle of their psychological and social development from infancy to adulthood. It refers that the kind of thing should be very considered by the teachers in designing the tasks and materials, such as introducing the formal grammar and applying inductive teaching to young learner would not be a good decision. Motivation is the second challenge that the English teachers of young learners perhaps face. It is explained that maintaining the students' motivation is crucial. Meanwhile, there are some factors which are able to influence the students' motivation.

The next challenge is to gain the students' attention. Getting the students attention is the first thing that the teachers should be able to do as children's attention period is limited. Another problem in teaching English to young learners is in terms of multi-level groups. Diversity in a group of students will lead to a serious problem. The diversity includes different motivation, different learning style, different first language, and especially different proficiency (Prayatni, 2019). The last but not least is in terms of assessment (Mendy, 2017) reveals that assessment is needed in order to know how well the learners have done while the most important assessment is the assessment for learning process since assessment is an integral part of learning process. Therefore, teachers have to be able to develop the students' language instead of focusing the assessment for testing them only.

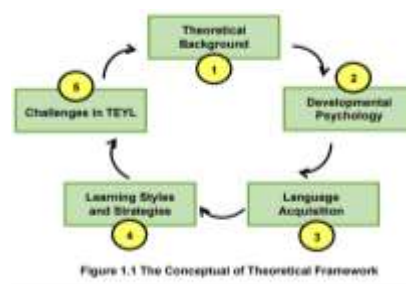
In other words, based on the information that has been read by the researcher through the

previous studies above, the researcher gets a lot of knowledge and information about the real condition in teaching English to young learners. Then, the present study aims to describe the practice also reveal the challenges of teaching English to young learners at primary school.

### Theoretical Framework

Teaching English to young learners (TEYL) is a complex and multifaceted process that requires a deep understanding of the theoretical frameworks that underpin effective teaching practices. This theoretical framework aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the key concepts, principles, and challenges involved in TEYL, highlighting the importance of considering the developmental level, cognitive abilities, and learning styles of young learners.

In conclusion, teaching English to young learners requires a deep understanding of the theoretical frameworks that underpin effective teaching practices. By considering the developmental level, cognitive abilities, and learning styles of young learners, teachers can design engaging and effective lessons that promote language development and cognitive growth. The challenges in TEYL, such as cognitive development, motivation, and classroom management, can be addressed by using a variety of teaching methods and strategies that cater to the unique needs of young learners. In addition, the conceptual framework of the study is summarized in a visual illustration or it is arranged in a cycle as illustrate in figure 1.1.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Global Practices in Teaching English to Young Learners

There are a number of reasons for this trend, for example, (Marques & Xavier, 2020); and Anggraini (2018) state that the widespread assumption that earlier language learning is better. In addition, Sunra et al (2020) confirms that the response to the ever-increasing demand for English as a result of economic globalization such a demand leads to pressure on governments from international economic forces to ensure there is an English-speaking

workforce. Moreover, Garton et al (2013) states that the pressure from parents in the national context who want their children to benefit socially and economically from learning English.

### ***English Language Teaching Policy in Primary Schools***

The status of English as a foreign language in Indonesia and as "local content" in elementary school entails extra hard work for teachers (Haris et al., 2018). However, the head of education department suggested to teach English as an extracurricular. In some regions, including in Malang, primary schools have included English as among the alternatives local content of their school curriculum. The English teachers in elementary school, therefore, are not only to teach English to young learners (as one of the lessons) but also to become material designers. They need to design materials, to teach well, and to suggest what approaches, methods, and techniques to be used (Widya & Rahayu, 2016).

### ***The Characteristics of Young Learners***

It is important to define young language learners before talking about the characteristics of young learners. For effective teaching and learning English to young learners and to create a school positive environment, teachers should understand the characteristics of young learners. More specifically, using current learning theories stemming from socio-cultural perspectives, the bulk of the required knowledge base and skills has been synthesized from multiple sources and these requirements will be organized into five pillars relative to (1) who children are, (2) how the children learn, (3) how the children learn a language, (4) how Indonesian children learn English as a foreign language, and (5) how teachers can facilitate children learning English as a foreign language (Pertiwi et al., 2020). In conclusion, planning plays a prominent role in teaching. Strongly emphasizes that without proper planning, teaching could be a threat to students' development and teacher's way of teaching.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research design of this study is qualitative research. It is not only appropriate but also necessary in a single classroom or school setting that involves teachers, educators and students (Kersten & Rohde, 2013). The study tries to provide a systematic description or information of a situation of a phenomenon as factual and accurate as possible without manipulating or interfering with the phenomenon observed. In this study, the researcher uses a

case study in investigating the implementation of teaching English to young learners at primary schools in Sitiarjo.

Data for this study were gathered from various sources: survey, questionnaire, interview, school and classroom observation, and document analysis. Those data collected were to describe the implementation of TEYL at primary schools in Sitiarjo and the challenges of the implementation of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in primary schools. In this study, the data collection method employed: school and classroom observation, survey, questionnaire, interview, and document analysis. Therefore, the research process of the data analysis is summarized in a visual illustration or it is arranged in a cycle as illustrated in figure 2.1.

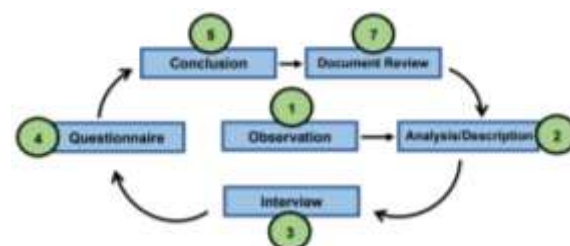


Figure 2.1 The Research Process of Data Analysis

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

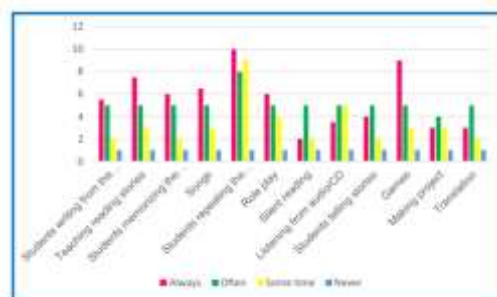
### *The Practices of TEYL at primary School in SD Anak Sholeh Full Day Sitiarjo*

CONTENT	LEARNING OBJECTIVES	LEARNING MATERIALS	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT	NOTES/ OBSERVATION
Learning/Spelling Reading/Listening Writing/Processing	at the end of Phase 1, students can recognize with certain patterns in English to interact in a wide range of social and classroom situations, but are still predictable or routine. They change/replace some sentence elements to be able to participate in learning activities, such as asking simple questions, asking for clarification and asking permission. They are several strategies to identify important information in spoken contexts, such as asking the speaker to repeat or speak more clearly or asking the meaning of a word. They follow a simple set of instructions related to classroom procedures and learning activities.	Unit 1: Hello, my name is... Unit 2: I want to be a... Unit 3: How much is it?	Students are able to identify and write correctly words for food and drink accurately and correctly. Students are able to respond and write sentences about something that has food and drink accurately and correctly. Students are able to identify and use numbers (tenants) and thousands related to food and drink prices accurately and correctly. Students are able to respond and write sentences about numbers related to food and drink prices accurately and correctly.	A-Exam B-Exam	

Figure 3.6 Example of English syllabus

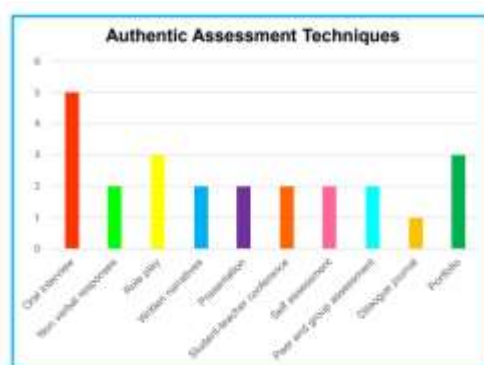
Based on the data of syllabus in SD Anak Sholeh Full Day, the teacher did all the steps of the curriculum processes: diagnosis of needs: formulation of objectives: selection of content; organization of content; selection of learning experiences; organization of learning experience;

and determination of what to evaluate and means to evaluate. Then, looking at the syllabus content, the teacher used the topical syllabus according to the kinds of syllabuses commonly found in current English as a second language courses and materials (Tomora, 2022). In other words, the syllabus begins with the standard competence that will be achieved by the students.



**Figure 3.7 Frequency of activities used in class**

It is not surprisingly that students repeating the teacher's pronunciation and games are the most activity that always be done by the teachers in SD Anak Sholeh Full Day. Moreover, the teachers always did this activity in every lesson. According to them, it is because giving role model to the students is very important. Regarding to this situation, the teachers need to have appropriate or even excellent strategies and skill so that the students can follow the teaching and learning process well. In addition, it is possibility that providing English language examples to students requires a lot of activities that can help improve their English language proficiency to a higher level.



**Figure 3.14 Assessment techniques used in the classroom**

From the questionnaires distributed to the two teachers, it could be seen that the teachers conducted oral interviews in their assessment process. The oral interviews were done in the form of formative or summative test. It indicated that the teachers advocate English teaching communicatively.

Moreover, there was an oral test in the final examination for grade 5th.

***The Challenges of TEYL at primary School in SD Anak Sholeh Full Day Sitarjo***

What are the detentions and challenges of the implementation of TEYL at primary school?	• 2013 curriculum which not included English as a subject in curriculum structure.
	• Teaching media such as projector and sound system are not standard. It sometimes broken and not clear enough since the English teaching at school uses software and multimedia.
	• Less of teaching media that support effective teaching-learning atmosphere.
	• Inappropriate class display arrangement.
	• Inappropriate choosing of teaching references.
	• Less of enthusiasm and motivation of students in learning English due to lack of mastery of vocabularies.

From the teacher's interviews, it could be seen that they have same problem of implementing English teaching at school that is the government policy on English subject at school. When the 2006 curriculum was launched and implemented in primary schools, English was taught as a local content. In addition, it became the challenge for English teachers to use English in teaching process in the classroom. English teachers need to improve their English skills especially speaking and pronunciation skills through special training so that they have adequate confidence to use English in the classroom and school context.

Then, the English language environment and exposure in the primary school especially SD Anak Sholeh Full Day Sitarjo studied apparently were lacking. The students were not being exposed to a conducive English language environment where they were given ample opportunities to use the language in and out of the classroom, and in and out of the school. Also, it is good for the students to have English real situation as an exposure to learn English. It is becoming the challenge as well for English teachers in primary school to put more English visual aids so that students are more familiar with English situation.

## **Discussion**



**Factors of the Challenges Faced by The Teachers in Teaching English to Young Learners at Primary school****1. *Teachers' Practices Regarding to the Implementation of Teaching English to Young Learners***

The discussions on the implementation of TEYL are divided into 2 points. The first is the teaching preparation with relevant theories and previous research findings. It concerns on the designing the English teaching activities started from the preparation of lesson plan, teaching materials, teaching media and soon. The second is the English process with relevant theories and previous research findings. It concerns with pre-activities, whilst-activities and post-activities in the teaching learning process.

**2. *Teachers' Challenges Regarding to the Status of English in National Curriculum***

In short, English teachers in rural primary schools are not only struggling with curriculum and their competences in English, but also with the socio-economic status of the students. It is apparent from the analysis that the low socio-economic status of the parents hinders them to support their children to study English. For instance, parents may have less time to stimulate students to actively learn English due to their work. In addition, their low income renders them incapable of providing facilities to learn the language. As a result, the minimum stimulus lower students' motivation. This causes them to feel uninterested to learn English. For example, they underestimate the lesson, and do not pay attention to the lesson, as indicated by the low grades, and the high frequency of skipping homework. Thus, there is a clear relation between the low socio-economic status and students' achievement.

**CONCLUSION**

As mentioned in the first chapter, this research is intended to answer two purposes of research: (1) to analyze how the home literacy environment supports teaching English to Young Learners, (2) to analyze how the school literacy environment supports teaching English to Young Learners. The implementation of TEYL in primary school was varied from one school to another since there was no guidance from the government on the English teaching program in primary school. Therefore, in SD Anak Sholeh Full Day, the teachers designed the syllabus based on the students' needs, the previous curriculum, syllabus from the government, and even

they create by themselves. Then, the activities in the class are various because it depends on the teachers' creativity and the school facilities. The teachers' creativity will enrich students' learning experiences. A creative teacher will give various way of teaching so that students will have many different learning experiences through different learning tasks and activities.

Then, the biggest challenge of the implementation of teaching English to young learners is the government policy. The inclusion of the English language as an extracurricular in the national education curriculum of primary school affected to the implementation of teaching English at primary schools in Indonesia especially in SD Anak Sholeh Full Day. Another challenge of teaching English to young learners in SD Anak Sholeh Full Day was the teachers' competence. It is because lack of appropriate training is still seen as problematic and becoming a challenge by many teachers in SD Anak Sholeh Full Day as well. Moreover, it was known from the questionnaire that most of the English teachers have English proficiency in the intermediate level. Moreover, English language environment and exposure became a challenge in teaching English as a second and foreign language in Indonesia.

Finally, this research is suggested revealing the practices and challenges in teaching English to young learners. However, it is also about the practices and challenges, further research is suggested investigating the impact of students' behaviour and school environment in TEYL. Remember that the study on this topic is still limited. Even a study about the practices and challenges in teaching English to young learners can be conducted.

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