

## **THE NEED OF ENGLISH FOR INDONESIAN YOUNG LEARNERS; STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The discussions about English education at an early age have led to different perspectives. Many studies have shown that "younger is better" at learning English. However, it is no longer acceptable claiming that it is better to start early or that adult learners are better than young people in most of cases. In addition, there are many studies in which the analysis concern on the teacher's perspective to look at the challenges of teaching English to young learners. Therefore, this study aims to reveal how students perceive English language in general. This study carried out a narrative research method in which the primary data was collected from the reflections of the students' memoranda and supported by a semi-structured interview. Meanwhile, the sampling was done through purposive sampling technique. The research results are analyzed thematically which include several points: (A) *Student's Perspective*, (B) *Student's Difficulties in Learning English*, and (C) *Student's desire to have an Ideal English teacher*. Based on the discussion of the results, this study also proposes several approaches in teaching English for young learners. Thus, it provides a complete picture of TEYL in Indonesian context and is expected to give English teachers an idea of the importance of considering aspects related to the challenges and difficulties of young learners from a learning perspective.

**Keyword:** TEYL, student's perspective, teaching challenges, learning difficulties

### **INTRODUCTION**

Internationally we can connect with each other, exchange cultures and languages and establish cooperation as the world seems to have no meaningful boundaries. This is then what we so-called as the process of globalization and the tendency of using English as the language of the world seems to be growing. Thus, English is not used only in English-speaking countries since its widespread across continents throughout the world. Even in some non-English speaking countries, it is no longer considered a foreign language but as a second language such as in part of Europe i.e. Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Luxembourg, Austria, Germany, Poland and so forth (Breene, 2019). While in part of Asia, a large number of the population that uses English as a second or third language are India, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Singapore which recognize English as their official language. Due to the large and diverse population, it is difficult to determine the exact number of English speakers in Asia,

but there are an estimated 125 million in India, 94 million in Pakistan, and 90 million in the Philippines (Kiprop, 2018). In fact, India is the most populous state with English as their official language.

In context, English has the status of a foreign language in Indonesia, yet it is the most popular language which people are interested to learn about. Thus, many parents send their children to international or bilingual schools from an early age. In addition, there are also those who choose to take English courses to help them improve their skills. This is done on the assumption that English skills can be well trained when somebody is in an environment that allows them to be social using English, especially if they are accustomed to it since childhood. According to Akçay *et al* (2015) an early move to learn English is important for young learners as English is a global language used in most of live aspects even after passing through the primary and secondary levels. This idea is supported by Ahmed (2015) and Nguyen & Terry (2017) about how schools hold a crucial role in introducing the importance of English and acquiring it. Other studies also conveyed that teaching English should be started at an early age as it is considered effective (Mwalongo, 2016). Due to the nature of high curiosity, it will be very easy for young learners to understand the language lessons. In addition, they will also naturally assimilate information about other cultures through the language. Moreover, most children strive for new experiences, including learning a new language since they like to be active and still have a lot of energy Uysal & Yavuz (2016). The other complexity is provided in the study conducted by Sari (2019) that discussed both advantages and disadvantages of teaching English at early childhood education. She mentioned several advantages that benefit the students such as providing an opportunity for early diversity, improving student's working memory, promoting student's creativity, imagination and building confidence as well as understanding. On the contrary, the disadvantages she mentioned include student's feeling and emotions that the younger they start, the sooner they will experience reluctance, lonely, afraid and other kind of negative feelings. Besides, she also mentioned the worst possibility of language decline that may be happened since young learners will get confused in differentiating between their mother tongue and the other language they learn. Even they may face cultural confusion.

Thus, the aspect of age has been controversial among researchers in second language acquisition probably because young learners are perceived perform better at L2. Numerous studies show the predominance of young learners over older learners in terms of language skills (e.g. Oyama, 1976; Patkowski, 1980; Krashen, 1981; Johnson & Newport, 1898; Bley-vroman, 1990; Slavoff & Johnson, 1995). Some argued that this view is indeed faulty, as the success of foreign language learning is not determined solely by age and exposure factors. Many other factors remain to be considered in order to ensure the effectiveness of English teaching for young learners. For instance, the type of language teaching offered, psychological and social factors, materials of teaching, cognitive differences, learning styles and preference, and many other factors (Fitrawati, 2013). Meanwhile, Herwiana (2017) argued that motivation is the most crucial key to mastering a language. It does not matter if they are young or old as long as they are motivated to learn, they will successfully acquire the language. She also suggested teachers to be well-prepared in creating an effective and innovative teaching and learning process to increase the motivation of learners.

However, most English language teachers in Indonesian primary schools are secondary trained EFL teachers but are not specially trained to teach English to primary school children because there is no Indonesian teacher education program that specially prepares English language teachers for primary school level. As a result, field facts about teachers' difficulties in teaching English to young learners are often found. Hosni (2015) conveyed that the dynamics of the learning process can lead to confusion and problems that can hinder the language acquisition process. Inefficient input and output may cause problems for students such as unawareness of the real need for English itself. Thus, much attention should be paid to student's motivation as it is considered to be the driving force for students to go further. Furthermore, Prihatin *et al* (2021) stated that TEYL is a challenge for a student when it comes to academic progress, motivation, and discipline issues. In-service teachers, meanwhile, are challenged by their limited expertise in TEYL methods and techniques, as well as their lack of professional development. In addition, other challenges emerge from several aspects such as curriculum, school facilities, the capacity of class, and different cultural backgrounds. Other study revealed that the problems teachers face when teaching English to primary school students include limited time allocation, student's vocabulary, pronunciation skills, student's interests, and limited facilities such as textbooks, media and teaching materials. Other than that, the huge class capacity has also become a crucial problem (Kusmaryati, 2020). Fundamentally, there is a lot of thought about how to teach and what to teach since teaching in primary education is not the same as adult education. It forces teachers to seek creative pedagogical approaches to ensure a high quality learning experience. Meanwhile, the conception of acquiring a language is not only a matter of format or concept understanding but the output of capability in speaking the language fluently for trading ideas and communication purposes.

A review of the available literature reveals a great deal of research on how young learners learn, how teachers encourage young learners, and what are the teacher's difficulties especially in Indonesian EFL context. Most of them are taken from teacher's perspective (Damayanti & Faozah, 2014; Octaviana, 2017; Saputra, 2017; Widodo & Dewi, 2018; Prayatni, 2019; Dewi, 2019; Wulandari *et al*, 2020; Mardasari, 2020). However, there have been a few studies on the reasons why young learners learn English, how they assume its importance, how they identify their own difficulties as well as the expectations. Thus, the researcher formulated research question of how do young learners perceive English learning as well as its difficulties and their expectations in Indonesian context? The purpose of the study is to explore the conception of learning English as well as the difficulties and expectations from the student's perspective. According to the given perspective of students, the researcher then proposes several approaches based on the findings and directly addressed to the teachers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. The Conception of Children's Language Learning

Curtain & Pesola Dahlberg (2000) argued that the effectiveness of language teaching is measured in terms of relevant issues and context to students' lives. Meanwhile, the main thing that needs to consider is the student's learning experience, which is influenced by the teaching method and its evaluation. Therefore, it is important for teachers to know their target learners before developing good English instruction. On the other hand, studies of many theories and research reports examine children's understandings to unequivocally conclude that children are

children - not young adults. Even many studies of peer culture (e.g., in the works of Corsaro, 1985) show that children have their own world and habits. They have different ways of doing things that differ from that of adults. Thus, this idea encourages us of how children should be treated and praised on their own. In term of English language learning, process information differs between EYL and adult learners. From an early age, children commonly begin to write words related to concrete things such as when they learn about vocabulary. Naturally, EYL does not have a complete comprehension of abstract subjects like grammar. It is reinforced by Bourke (2006), that young students do not have concepts of ideas such as speech, discourse or phonological parts. Furthermore, Cameron (2003) explained that it is not easy for children to use language to talk about language. In other words, they do not have the same access to adult students as the metalanguage that teachers can use to explain grammar or discourse. As Pinter (2006) pointed out, young learners are very curious about trying new things and looking for abstract to concrete things. In addition, Harmer (2007) also pointed out that young learners gain understanding not only from explanations, but also from seeing and hearing when they have the opportunity to experience, to touch and to interact. These kind of characteristics are necessary to be known and understood by the teachers as it may influence many aspects in the teaching and learning process.

## **2. ELT Practices in Indonesian Context; Curriculum Perspective**

Indonesia's English language education policy is closely linked to the country's political, economic and social development. These policies were driven by intentional goals and a changing context of national development. Over the years, some political changes have taken place when the common path of political endeavor has become the politics of foreign languages, characterized by a focus on ideological function. In essence, national education focuses on its role in promoting economic development and national modernization. Therefore, English is recognized as an important tool for participating in economic, commercial, technical and cultural exchanges with other parts of the world. It is as a mean to facilitate the modernization process in international aspect. Historically, the curriculum-translation method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) was the only option to teach English in Indonesian schools since independence in 1945. This method was considered to be suitable for large class sizes, was inexpensive, and only required teachers' knowledge of grammar. From the early 1950s, the Indonesian government began to introduce an audio-language approach that was eventually incorporated into the ELT curriculum. An important feature of this audio-language approach was the widespread use of the language laboratory as the main basis for language learning.

After many years of implementation, the audio-language-based curriculum faced the challenge of the less number of teachers participating in curriculum training. The number of qualified teachers was much smaller than the need for English teachers across Indonesia (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). Another major problem in implementing the audio-language-based curriculum was that the large class size forced teachers to re-implement grammar translation methods. However, the structure based audio lingual curriculum remained unsuccessful due to the fact that the requirements to implement the audio lingual approach were not fulfilled, such as the absence of language laboratory and native speakers as models (Jazadi, 2000; Sarihuddin, 2013). Then, in 1975, a revision of the English curriculum was carried out that included many components such as learning objectives, teaching materials, approaches, and assessments. In this period, the government introduced compulsory English textbooks for junior and senior high school students for the first time. After the failure of the English curriculum in 1975, the

government introduced a new curriculum i.e. the 1984 Communication-Based Curriculum. It is said that this would help students to enhance the communication ability. However, during its implementation, the curriculum still emphasized the structure of language form (Jazadi, 2000). It could be revealed from the English textbook design for junior and senior high schools which language structure was still a dominant. Thus, the 1984 curriculum was regarded as failing to meet expectations for several reasons such as the implementation of irrelevant audio-language and grammar-translation methods. In addition, the use of the mother tongue (Indonesian) was still dominant in the classroom (Jazadi, 2000). Yet, the curriculum in 1984 experienced failures and became the reason for the next ELT curriculum revision i.e. the 1994 curriculum. Practically, it was adopted a communicative approach which actually integrate the four language skills, linguistic understanding and variety of approaches. However, the teaching and learning process faced several barriers. Instead of combining four language skills, the teacher still concerned on student's reading comprehension only. Furthermore, the format of assessment focused on multiple choices form and did not include all aspect of communication skills. Reflecting the previous curriculum, due to the fact that students were unable to communicate or understand English textbooks, the government adopted a policy of curriculum changes known as the 2004 curriculum or curriculum based on competency (Jazadi, 2000). Due to the communication orientation, trends in the English learning process at school emphasized the student-centered approach. In the final national exam, the government integrated listening, reading and grammar into the English test while school teachers conducted oral and written expression assessments separately (Sarihuudin, 2013).

As the Indonesian government introduced a centralized curriculum policy, teachers were not given the opportunity to develop a curriculum that sparked criticism of the implementation of a competency-based curriculum in 2004 (Nur & Madkur, 2014). As a result, the government re-issued its policy to improve the previous curriculum by taking into account the recommendations of teachers and schools. The 2006 curriculum was later called a school-based curriculum. Although the 2006 curriculum has plenty of flexibility, the ELT curriculum issues were still complex since students learn only the pronunciation, word emphasis, but those were not the point to be tested during the exam. Besides, the students were not taught four English skills in a comprehensive way since the teaching process concerned on grammatical learning. In addition, students learnt more expressions and the learning orientation was textbooks-based instead of productive skills for communication purposes. It became even worse when the teaching and learning methodology was still teacher-centered (Nur & Madkur, 2014). The curriculum changes in Indonesia have been in response to previous curriculum failures, such as the 2013 curriculum, which was formulated as a communication curriculum related to English Language Teaching (Tantra, 2015; Ahmad, 2014; Nur & Madkur, 2014). This goal is also stated in the National Education Ministry Ordinance No. 22 of 2006 that it is necessary to build communication skills of students in order to recognize the nature and meaning, to achieve a certain level of information literacy, to improve the country's competitiveness in the global community and to deepen students' understanding of the interrelationships between language and culture. However, although English is considered as one of the most important and global competition strategies, the fact is that despite years of learning English in school (junior and senior high school level, a total of 6 years) it does not provide significant or satisfactory results. There are many school graduates who are not proficient in speaking English, many of whom choose to study in English courses. Based on a

number of studies (Sarihuudin, 2013; Nur & Madkur, 2014) the textbook-guided, grammar-focused, teacher-centered, large classroom sizes, teachers with low English proficiency, become the portrait of ELT failures although implemented new curriculum. Even in 2013 curriculum (K-13), English is not considered an important subject to be taught in elementary school where they can study English outside the curriculum as extracurricular or in courses. This curriculum policy is very contradictory to what is actually needed and what has been formulated.

### 3. TEYL Practices in Indonesian Context

Indonesian EYL practice dates back to the 1980's where the survey revealed a strong parental belief in the needs of children studying English. In addition, the poor results of junior high school students' English proficiency (Lestari, 2003) had led to an idea in introducing English to primary school. English was introduced into the primary school curriculum through Presidential Decree No. 28 of 1990 (Kirkpatrick, 2012). It later became the subject of local content with the issuance of Decree No. 060 of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1993 (Alwasilah, 2013; Hawanti, 2014; Zein, 2012). This policy offered choices that English could be taught to grades 4, 5, and 6 or school might decide to teach other subjects such as arts, dance, music, and sports that are suitable for socio-economic, geographical locations and local needs. This policy caused a dilemma as it resulted in the primary school providing English in a hurry without considering the readiness of both students and teachers.

There have been reports of poor classroom performance by unqualified teachers (Zein, 2012; Lestari, 2003; Hawanti, 2014). Moreover, plenty of classroom practices are irrelevant, as Alwasilah (2013) conducted a survey of Primary English teachers and found that about 58% of them in the states of Jakarta, West Java and Banten did not have English background or proper training of TEYL. Teaching English in Indonesian primary school requires qualified teachers to help students learn English better. In essence, the rules governing how English lessons are taught in Indonesia affect the quality of the program. As for teacher quality, some studies on teaching English lessons in Indonesian primary schools have shown that most teachers are not yet qualified to teach competently and effectively. It is well-supported by the fact that the teacher education departments of some universities have provided many pre-teachers over the years to prepare them teaching for the SMP (junior high school) and SMA (senior high school) according to the priority needs of the English language in both levels. Basically, primary school teachers are categorized into two types; Specialist and Generalist (Mochammad Subhan Zein, 2012). Generalist teacher is a class teacher and the teaching areas include other subjects corresponding to the qualifications of a PGSD (BA in Primary Education) teacher. In contrast, Specialist teacher specifically teach certain subject (read: English) in all grades (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>) and have more various English proficiency corresponding to their qualification as a bachelor of English Education (B. Ed).

According to data from the ministry (2015), about 95% of 177,985 primary schools teaching English have an estimated 62,883 subject teachers. The complexity of the problem has been demonstrated in many studies of how Generalist teachers implement traditional learning methods by reading and dictating the contents of books aloud then ask the children to repeat. In addition, they usually write on the board and ask the students to copy (Jazadi, 2000; Lestari, 2003). If they are asked to teach English, they will absolutely find it difficult to integrate language skills, pay less attention to the child's personality and learning development

and are more interested in textbook coverage (Lestari, 2003; Hawanti, 2014). Furthermore, most of these teachers teach their children in another language, whether Indonesian or indigenous, mainly because they are perceived to have a low level of communication skills in the target language (Chodidjah, 2008). On the other hand, the pedagogical practice of specialist teachers varies from one case to another.

Fundamentally, there are several factors that negatively affect the pedagogical performance of elementary English teachers. The challenges or problems come from the status of English in Indonesia, the educational qualifications of the teachers, and the socio-economic background of the parents (Anggraini, 2018). Other study revealed that the challenges are related to the government policy, curriculum and professional development system for teachers (Musiman *et al.*, 2020). On the one hand, more than 30 students are crammed into a medium-sized classroom, and teachers do everything possible to keep the class in order. Encouraging student-centered learning for communication activities was less of a concern than maintaining discipline in the classroom (Asriyanti *et al.*, 2013). Along the same line to the previous result, professional development opportunities for teachers are limited where many training programs are only available to teachers in government positions, while others are designed for those with links to local authorities. Even the available curricula are often limited by the mismatch between curriculum content and the professional needs of teachers (Zein, 2017). The third thing worth to discuss is that the poor employment conditions associated with the lower status and income of teachers also significantly lower the professionalism of specialist teachers. Many teachers have to combine teaching in several different schools to make ends meet. Some teachers may have been invited to government-funded training courses, while others receive no single opportunity. It has also been reported that the content of the training sometimes does not fit the needs of the participants and most of the training is unstructured and concentrated on many days of one-day training (Sulistiyono *et al.*, 2019).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study performed a narrative inquiry which is commonly interpreted as one of qualitative approaches. Thus, this study captures the personal and human dimensions of life experiences then presents them as narratives in order to answer the research question. Connelly & Clandinin (1990) clarify that by employing narrative inquiry means as revealing how humans experience the world. In a similar vein, Moen (2006) explained that the narrative approach concerns on the meanings and values that individuals attribute to their experiences through the stories they would like to share. Furthermore, Clandinin *et al.* (2007) emphasized that narrative is the study of one's story of experience. These thoughts suggest that the narrative inquiry approach seeks to understand how people think and feel through events and what they value. For that reason, the researcher performed narrative inquiry as a way to understand the experiences of the selected participants in this study. This study may seem subjective, but it captures the complexity of the meanings inherent in the stories that represent an in-depth analysis of the data.

### **Participant**

The study involved students in private and public elementary schools in Jombang, East Java, Indonesia. Participants were selected based on the purposive sampling criteria: (a) between the ages of 11 and 12, (b) studying in English courses (c) studying in public or private schools in

Jombang, (d) learning English for more than two years. This study eventually consisted of 3 participants; 1 person from a public elementary school and 2 others from two different private elementary schools. In addition to considering purposive sampling criteria, the researcher also prioritized their feasibility for inclusion.

### **Research Instrument**

The instruments used in this study are documents as primary data and semi-structured face-to-face interview as secondary data. The document mentioned is actually a student's reflection memoranda that contains 7 questions on 3 sub-headings: (a) student perspectives, (b) students' difficulties, and (c) students' expectations. These three sub-headings are designed to explore the concepts of English students as well as the difficulties they face. After knowing the conceptions and difficulties based on the reasoning they provide, their hopes were also explored and expected to be a turning point in assessing and improving the quality of future learning. In addition, before issuing reflection memoranda to students, all questions were reviewed, revised and rewritten to ensure accuracy and to be passed on to young learners. Meanwhile, to ensure the results of primary data, interviews were conducted two times in a semi-structured manner in case to confirm the data. All questions in both the reflection memoranda and interviews were conducted in Indonesian (students' first language) to ensure that the data collected was meaningful and factual.

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

The data were collected through document and semi-structured face-to-face interview. As the primary data, the document was taken from the student's reflection memoranda to show the conceptions, difficulties, and expectations from their perspective of learning English. Meanwhile, the interview was conducted to confirm the data from the collected documents and to obtain further information. The duration of the interview with each participant lasted for approximately 10 minutes. During the interview, student's voices were recorded with their consent. In order to avoid story intervention, the researcher reduced personal responses during the interview process. In addition to recording participants' voices, the researcher also made notes during the interview to follow up the answers. After collecting the data, the researcher carefully transcribed the recordings of the interviews into English as well as the answers written in student's reflection memoranda then began the narrative analysis by rereading the transcript recordings. During the storytelling process, the researcher described each event, story, and experience that the participants narrated by associating space and time in a meaningful way. The emerging themes were categorized and narrated thematically, taking into account the student's argumentations. In addition, researcher used cross-case analysis techniques (Creswell, 1998) to organize the complexity of stories into manageable topic and sub-topics, to find similarities and differences between stories, and to present conclusions. To ensure credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), to validate the descriptive data of the interview, and to reduce the interpretation of the final reports, the researcher provide participants with both stories and analysis copies for feedback and data confirmation. This process is part of the relationship's responsibility to engage with participants in narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) to discuss boundaries, anonymity, and ethical issues.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study are organized into three main components to answer the research question and are analyzed thematically. Those components include as follows; (a) Student's Perspective, (b) Student's Difficulties in Learning English, (c) Student's desire to have an Ideal



English teacher. In the first component, the researcher discusses the perspective of young learners in English, whose answers are derived from student's reflection memoranda and supported by data obtained during the interview. The second component discusses the difficulties that the students face in learning English while the third component discusses the details of the ideal English teacher that students expect. After presenting the reality of TEYL from a student's perspective, the final component proposes a TEYL approach to the consideration of English teachers as well as education stakeholders. Before going further, here is a brief profile of 3 young learners from 3 different schools:

*Table 1.1. Profile of Research Subject*

<b>Subject Initial</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Grade</b>
DF	P1	Male	12 years old	Public School	6 <sup>th</sup>
DA	P2	Female	11 years old	Islamic Private School	6 <sup>th</sup>
RP	P3	Female	12 years old	Islamic Private School	6 <sup>th</sup>

Throughout this paper, the participants are represented as P1 for participant 1, P2 for participant 2, P3 for participant 3. The followings are themes emerging from the participants' responses to the student's reflection memoranda as well as the interview questions.

### **A. Student's Perspective**

There are many reasons why it is important to teach English in elementary school as it is stated by Sepyanda (2017). First, it is widely used as a universal language that covers many aspects of life. Second, primary school students as youngsters are the best setting for learning English as a foreign language. Thus, it will be easier for students to learn English as a core subject at the following grade levels. Meanwhile, in the study conducted by Oktaviani & Fauzan (2017), was revealed the agreement of learning English for young learners from the teacher's perspective. The results include several reasons. First, if the young learners learn English early, the English mastery will be better. Second, English will be useful for the young learners to get a job in the future, and the third reason is that by mastering English, the young learners will have the social-economic benefits in the future. Then, according to P1's point of view as a student, learning English is considered essential for being able to speak fluently. He also mentioned that English is applied at every level of the school so that he is eager to continue learning. He stated as follows,

*"English is important to us in high schools or college education so that we can speak fluently and not be embarrassed by other English speaking friends".*

Previously, he was taught English in school from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. He stated that actually, the English subject has been abolished since he studied in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Fortunately, when he was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the school held an extra-curricular English program where he involved in. Yet, it did not last long since the school decided to drop the extra-curricular activities due to COVID-19 and the government ruled out policy where we cannot implement face-to-face learning. As a result, English extra-curricular program was hampered. By September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, he began taking English course to improve his English skills.

This point is strong enough to claim that the implementation of the 2013 curriculum have a very significant impact on TEYL. From the beginning it was not recommended as a compulsory subject and today it is not even recommended as a local content. The reasons revealed behind this problem are (a) preventing student's cognitive burden and (b) focusing students on learning

Indonesian as the national language. This situation ends up with a crucial question that doesn't this policy actually raise a new, more complex problem where the need for English is reduced while we have thousands of English language education graduates each year. Then, what about the distribution of their professionalism after college? Despite the complexity of the TEYL problems, efforts to introduce young learners to English are invaluable, as are the efforts made by the school of P1 that provide English as program of extracurricular activity. This activity is mainly conducted to help students develop their English language skills. In pursuit of this, Campbell (1973) argues that extracurricular activities may support the educational process, which sometimes involves the role of teachers or instructors and is performed outside the classroom. Above all, the sight of P1 is certainly quite implausible. He understands the need to learn English from a young age especially for the next academic preparation. He perceived its importance and claimed it as follows,

*“There will be English lesson in junior high school. I'm afraid that I won't be able to speak English or I'll be confused because on average there will be a lot of junior high school students who can speak English well. That's why I am taking course”*

From his statement it can also be concluded that apart from wanting to equip himself with English, learning English becomes such a prestige since he personally does not want to be ashamed by those who are capable in English. Besides, it has been for about 2,5 months for him studying English at course and he mentioned the progress.

*“The changes are many. I became more aware of the English language of certain words and I can compose sentences well. There's actually a lot of improvements.”*

Another visionary point of view was also expressed by P2, where it is important to learn English for the benefit of the future. Unfortunately, she did not elaborate the answer very well and there is no further information about the usefulness of English for her in the future except for pursuing scholarships.

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Researcher : *“How important is it in the future?”*

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P2 : *“We can use English to get a scholarship to study abroad, for example”*

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Still, at least she understands the need to learn English. In addition, she explained that she had never studied English at school because the subject had not existed since the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, not even an extra-curricular program of English. So, she has been learning English in a course for 11 months and feel the significant progress.

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Researcher : *“Then how is the progress in the course so far? Is there a difference between before and after joining the course?”*

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P2 : *“Very different. I used to not understand simple sentences such as “I like” but now I can understand. I be like, oh it turns out like this, must add this and that, and others.”*

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The same point stated by P3 where she gave a broader view yet quite limited that she should learn English by saying that, *“because almost all countries use English”*. It is therefore important that she learn to communicate well in English as early as possible. In line with perspectives of the two participants, Ilyosovna (2020) stated that due to high-rate of English use, thousand schools and universities offer programs in English for international students. For such reason, P3 began studying in July 2016 from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Nevertheless, she has been currently involved in one of English courses. When she was being asked about the necessity of taking course, she argued as follows:

P3	: “Due to COVID-19 and I had to study online but I understand nothing”.
Researcher	: “Is there any other reason? How does your teacher teach English, then?”
P3	: “The teacher doesn't explain the material. We are asked to read and learn on our own”.
Researcher	: “No explanation at all?”
P3	: “Yes, there is, but I don't understand the explanation”
Researcher	: “Then what if you don't understand but have to do the task?”
P3	: “Sometimes I go to translate on google”

In fact, she claimed to have studied English since in the first grade, but she still needs a course to help her develop English skills. Even though the teaching and learning was conducted face-to-face before COVID-19, she admitted that it would be better if she studied English in the course since the environment supports her to learn English in the past six months. Moreover, she also feels the learning progress and mentioned that,

*“If I get an assignment from school, I don't translate much anymore, I understand a lot. Then I also began to understand the meaning of English sentences.”*

In addition to studying in the course, the three participants have their own way of developing their English language skills. P1 explained that the way to improve English is to watch videos on YouTube. He prefers to watch videos that explain the English materials such as tenses and many other topics. Interestingly, he does not choose films or other videos which can be more fun to help him develop his English. In addition, he also learns how to pronounce words correctly, memorizes vocabulary and learns to compose sentences in English by himself apart from learning at course. Meanwhile, P2 said that the only way to improve her English skills is to review the material she learns during the course. She has no idea about other ways to improve her English skills. But she feels interested and motivated to learn English because many of her friends are also taking English course. Compared to P3, she has another way, which is to focus on speaking skills and practice with neighbors who can speak English. In addition, she also enriches vocabulary through memorization.

Above all, the most interesting thing to reveal is their motivation to learn English. P1 emphasized that his biggest motivation is to be able to speak English and not be ashamed of his friends. Meanwhile, both of P2 and P3 stated their desire to study abroad. However, P2 slightly added argument that because many of her friends are capable in English, so that she is also motivated while P3 explained the trigger that makes her want to study abroad, although the rationalization is not conveyed properly.

Researcher	: “Why do you have to study abroad?”.
P2	: “Because I want to add insight”
Researcher	: “Is there any other motivation?”
P2	: “Because living abroad seems easy”
Researcher	: “What's easy?”
P2	: “The value of the currency is greater but it's not just about the money”
Researcher	: “Then what?”
P2	: “I am not sure yet”

## B. Student's Difficulties in Learning English

Many studies highlight the difficulties associated with TEYL in terms of teaching, for example, a study by Widodo & Dewi (2018) found that the problems are (1) lack of discipline among students during teaching and learning, (2) the variety of learning ability, (3) the difficulty of developing the practice of using English as their daily language, and (4) the lack of parental support. Meanwhile, the study conducted by Anggraini (2018) also revealed the challenges or problems including teachers' pedagogical competency, and parents' socio-economic background. Basically, TEYL has become one of major issues, in addition to the benefits and challenges that teachers specifically face. But what if the students themselves identify the difficulties they face in learning English? What can be the best possibilities for teachers to do? or what can be the best solutions given from the education stake holders? Table 1.2 shows the classification of student's difficulties both macro and micro of English skills.

*Table 1.2. Student's Difficulties in Learning English*

Subject	Difficulties						
	Macro Skills				Micro Skills		
	Speaking	Writing	Reading	Listening	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation
P1	V		V		V		V
P2	V		V	V			V
P3	V		V	V	V		V

It can be seen from Table 1.2 that P1 have difficulties in speaking, reading, grammar and pronunciation while learning English. The most surprising thing from P1 was his perception of reading and pronunciation skills. He assumed that he always has difficulty of reading when what he actually meant was the difficulty in how to pronounce particular word (read: pronunciation). There was a misconception that he actually didn't understand the difference between pronunciation and reading skill. Besides this kind of misconception, he has difficulty in reading itself since he does not always understand the meaning of certain texts due to limited lexical resources. As for the reasoning of each difficulty, he argued as follows:

Speaking	: <i>"I'm not sure but it is just because I can't really speak English."</i>
Pronunciation	: <i>"It is because I do not speak English properly and pronounce words correctly."</i>
Grammar	: <i>"It may be because I find it hard and unable to understand things like verbal sentences."</i>
Reading	: <i>"When it comes to reading, it's really hard for me to understand English texts"</i>

Meanwhile, the difficulties of P2 include speaking, reading, listening as well as pronunciation. However, she tried to give arguments, although it is so much limited yet much appreciated.

Speaking	: <i>"Because the words are different"</i>
Listening	: <i>"Sometimes I also write it wrong"</i>
Pronunciation	: <i>"I am not sure yet"</i>
Reading	: <i>"I am not sure yet"</i>

Then, the difficulties experienced by P3 when learning English are speaking, listening, grammar, reading and pronunciation for the reasons presented below. From the three participants, it can be concluded that they have a balance point of difficulty both macro and micro of English skills. In essence, those four skills and three components are integrated. For

example, the difficulty in understanding the text experienced by P1 is due to the lack of lexical resources. Thus, vocabulary acquisition actually supports reading comprehension, which is essentially a receptive skill and is a learner's input. The following is the reasoning of each difficulty for P3.

Speaking	: <i>"I often forget the English words. Other than that, it is always different from how the words are written and how to pronounce it"</i>
Listening	: <i>"It is not always clear whenever I listen to people speaking in English"</i> .
Grammar	: <i>"Not hard enough"</i>
Reading	: <i>"It's hard but a little"</i>
Pronunciation	: <i>"Because the way we pronounce it is much different from the way it is written"</i>

Although many strategies have been presented in many studies, the classic problems and lack of achievement of goals still occur today and can be considered as one of the current but unresolved issues as an ongoing crisis. Essentially, the effective formula in TEYL is closely related to the policies although the changes of curriculum after curriculum has been being a great concern of various parties involved in education, including teachers. Based on the study conducted by Poedjiastutie & Oliver (2017), three main problems are found in the Indonesian curriculum: a top-down approach, the absence of Needs Analysis (NA) studies, and no assessment of the curriculum. In summary, these three factors are suspected to contribute to the underdeveloped English communication skills of Indonesian students.

**C. Student’s Desire to Have an Ideal English Teacher**

Teacher is a profession that has a significant impact on improving the quality of human resources. The teacher should be able to develop the knowledge, belief and motivation of their students and provide inspirations (Kunter et al., 2013). If we have ever been asked about, *"Who is a good English teacher?"*, of course, our answers will be very diverse and subjective. Meanwhile, teaching English in non-English countries such as Indonesia will always remain interesting and challenging since the quality of English teachers is one of the keys to a successful learning. It encompasses not only the competence and knowledge of the teacher's pedagogy, but also some other aspects, including socio-effective characteristics to improve students' English proficiency. The following table is about how students perceive the ideal English teacher along with an analysis of the competencies that must be possessed and it is directly addressed to the teachers.

*Table 1.3. The Ideal English Teacher*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Ideal English Teacher is.....</b>	<b>Competence</b>
P1	Somebody who explains the material clearly, not in a hurry, gentle and not a bad-tempered Someone who often motivates students to always want to learn English	Pedagogical, Personal, Social
P2	Somebody who is honest and good at handling things, treat the students well and the way of teaching is not too fast since the ability of each student is different	Pedagogical, Personal, Social
P3	Somebody who is patient, kind, friendly, humble and pay fully attention to all of the students with no exceptions	Personal, Social

It is also important to discuss the ideals of English teacher traits from the student's perspective as a point of reference and resource for active reflection. Right after awareness raising, concrete actions are absolutely required. Based on the data identification in Table 1.3, the ideal teacher characteristics mentioned by P1 and P2 are categorized as pedagogical, personal, and social competence. On the other hand, the traits mentioned by P3 are categorized as personal and social competence.

Unfortunately, teacher's performance is not always impressive to students because students naturally have different learning characteristics and learning expectations. Yet, one of the factors influencing a student's learning motivation is the teacher's performance, although there are other influential factors, such as internal factor that include student's learning style or personality (Montgomery & Groat, 1998). Thus, in this case, it is important to listen to the voices of students on how the ideal English teacher is for them to bridge the gap between the teachers' expectations to their students and vice versa. Adjusting the expectations of almost all students for positive improvement in learning is reasonable, even essential for teachers. Additionally, it is possible to do this by listening to students' perceptions and expectations especially young learner's.

Theoretically, the characteristics of the ideal teacher are also classified into several competencies such as pedagogical, personal, social and professional. According to Liakopoulou (2011), pedagogical competence is the teacher's ability to understand the students, the teaching and learning processes, and self-actualization. Then, if this definition is reflected by what is expressed by P1 & P2, then their desire to have an ideal English teacher is a teacher who is able to explain the material clearly, not in a hurry (P1). In addition, P2 stated that the ideal teacher in the pedagogy aspect includes the ability of a good teacher in handling things, applying appropriate teaching patterns and understanding that each student's abilities are different.

Meanwhile, personality competence is defined as the ability of a teacher to perform a good personality, a stable, mature, efficient and intelligent attitude. Personality competence plays its role and functions in the preparation and improvement of human resources such as the construction of student's character (Nellitawati, 2017). This competency is also one of the criteria for an ideal teacher according to the three participants. P1 emphasized that the ideal teacher is someone who does not get angry easily and is gentle with students. Then, according to P2, the ideal teacher is someone who upholds honesty. Meanwhile, P3 stated a more complex points regarding with personal competence i.e. someone who is patient, kind, friendly and humble.

Fundamentally, personality competencies are self-centered that comes from self-reflection, self-motivation, and self-development (Blašková et al., 2014). To design effective and engaging learning for students, personality skills are required. Teachers who have the good personality skills to create engaging and effective learning should be rewarded. This award encourages teachers and potential teachers to develop good personality skills. With a good personal skill, teachers can be one of good examples for students and this will lead to an idea for better students and societies (Hidayah et al., 2020).

On the other hand, achieving personal goals in social interaction is called as social competence in order to maintain positive relationships with others (Arnold & Lindner-müller, 2012). The indicator of social competence assessment is the communication process (Zlatić et al., 2014). Based on the results found, P1 revealed that ideal teachers are those who are able to motivate students. The pattern of motivation given is also inseparable from the process of interaction and communication between teachers and students. In addition, the teacher's ability to understand the character of students is also important because the motivation given and its acceptance will be different for each individual. While the pattern of interaction or how to treat

someone well is also an integral part of the social process, so is the way the teacher treats students well, according to P2. This idea is supported by P3 which emphasizes that a teacher's attention must be carried out thoroughly on all students without exception. This process certainly involves interaction and communication that is built over a relatively long time since it is also related to one's emotions.

Furthermore, the last competence is professional competence which include the ability, knowledge, attitude, and motivation to shape a student's personality (Kunter et al., 2013). Educators have different levels of professionalism meanwhile the professional aspect and student educator supervision determine the success of learning (Tang & Choi, 2009). Professional abilities include (1) the understanding level of the curriculum based on the teaching materials, (2) the understanding of the relationship between concepts and other sciences, (3) the ability to acquire research steps, (4) the skill of critical review of teaching materials, (5) the capability to investigate and resolve the problem. Non-knowledge aspects can be important in determining a teacher's success. These aspects include teacher beliefs, work-related motivations, and the ability to self-adjust (Kunter et al., 2013). Unfortunately, the three participants did not raise the professional competencies that an ideal teacher should have. In fact, professional notions are much more abstract and very much tied to concepts and policies, which of course are beyond the reach of young learners.

#### **D. Proposing Approaches of TEYL for Indonesian EFL Teacher**

Young learners will always need a special approach to teaching English as a foreign language since they have special characteristics and different abilities. There are absolutely many ways to attract the attention of EYLs for successful learning. Therefore, it is important to consider the approaches in teaching them right after revealing their perspectives, expectations as well as the difficulties in learning English. This section is divided into two parts, the first is a proposed approach that corresponds to the student's learning difficulty and the second corresponds to what teacher has to implement as an ideal teacher. Here are some approaches provided as further insights after a complex discussion above:

##### **1. Corresponds to Student's Learning Difficulties**

Based on the dynamics of the existing national curriculum, at least students understand the difficulties faced in learning English. Next is about how teachers become more proactive and responsive to encourage and solve student problems. The most important thing is how English can be implemented and is more communicative. Throughout the history of language learning, several different teaching approaches and methodologies have been tried and tested, some of which have proven to be more popular and effective than others. One of the basic tenets of language teaching is a theoretical perspective on what language is and how it can be learned. In essence, an approach can bring up methods, ways of teaching something, which use classroom activities or techniques to help learners learn.

The results of this study show that students have difficulty learning English in both micro and macro skills. There are many alternative approaches that can be effectively implemented by teachers in the learning process, such as Total Physical Response, Silent Way, Communicative Language Learning, Suggestopedia, Whole Language, Intelligence Multiple, Neurolinguistic Programming, Lexical Approach and Competency-based language teaching. Along with its development are the design of communication approaches such as Naturalistic Approach, Cooperative Language Learning, Content-based Learning, Task-based Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The characteristics of each approach are provided as follows:

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Total Physical Response	Compulsory exercises are the main class activity in TPR. They are generally designed to highlight tasks and physical activities for the learners. In this sense, learners play the main roles as a listener and a performer where they listen carefully and respond physically to the teacher's commands (H. P. Widodo, 2005).
Silent Way	The role of the teacher is to perform only minimal repetitions and corrections, mostly silence, leaving the learner struggling to solve language problems and understand their methodology. Basically, the learner is not an audience attached to the bench but an active contributor to the learning process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
Communicative Language Learning	Ensuring the students to acquire communicative competence so that they can use the language accurately and appropriately. The communication activity enables students to achieve the communicative goals of the curriculum, engage students in communication, and requires the use of communication processes such as information exchange, discussion of meaning and interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
Suggestopedia	The instructional process in Suggestopedia is "student-oriented". An anxiety-free learning environment is established and collaboration within the group is considered helpful (Rustipa, 2011).
Whole Language	The Whole Language approach is based on the concept of constructivism, whereby children derive their knowledge from their active role in holistic and integrated learning. This approach requires that language skills be integrated with other aspects of the learning process. In addition, it also emphasizes the natural learning of reading and writing with an emphasis on real communication for fun, as children are motivated to learn if they see that what they learn matters for them (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
Multiple Intelligence	The multi-intelligence approach aims to meet the needs of students in learning English based on intelligence. In this case, the teacher should not only be a pure language teacher, but also a facilitator, observer and lesson designer (Ma'mun, 2019).
Neurolinguistic Programming	Neuro-linguistic programming deals with cognitive processes and analyze the internal mental activities such as thinking, remembering, perceiving, and learning. Neuro-linguistic programming also analyzes the entire body-mind system for human connections between internal development, language, and behavior (Delbio & Ilankumaran, 2018).
Cooperative Language Learning	Leadership, decision making and conflict management are integral parts of group work, and teachers should encourage students to use these skills in the classroom, as it is seen as a collaborative activity involving the mutual exchange of information. has to be learned through (Çelik et al., 2013).



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Content-based Learning	Content-based learning help students develop language skills for academic use and provide them with access to new concepts through meaningful context. It comes up different from what is commonly used since the teacher can design a curriculum that includes broad and varied subjects which may be of interest to the learner, and offer supplementary additions from the internet, newspapers, and other various reading sources, categorized by subject (Heo, 2006).
Task-based Language Teaching	It uses assessment functions as the main tool and requires meaningful and targeted use of language. On the other hand, the goal measure (composition) of the assessment function is the use of authentic, actual behavior or actual language that is typical for the target context. Meanwhile, the performance levels of the test participants are integrated (integrated) into the evaluation work. It is a criteria-based assessment that is often used as a constructive assessment (Noroozi & Taheri, 2021).

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## **2. Corresponds to what teacher do as an ideal teacher**

### **a. Emotional and Psychological Approach**

A good psychological understanding of young students may provide strong support when teachers deal with misbehavior of young learners. If teachers receive psychological knowledge of children's personalities, they will learn to develop strategies to deal with unwanted situations such as distractions and student misbehavior, and teachers will also learn to control their emotions and better manage the classroom (Poulou, 2005). Furthermore, psychological knowledge will also help teachers to develop personal closeness, as it is a crucial factor in motivating students. Having such professional closeness can help teachers to encourage children and organize lessons according to the psychological mood of the children. The teacher-learner relationship parallels increased motivation and higher education outcomes, both affective and cognitive (Maulana et al., 2014). As the three participants expected, a good teacher is one who is able to motivate students, provide guidance with a good personality, and perform professional teaching activities.

### **b. Cognitive Approach**

Cognitive approach includes a systematic internal ability that can guide learners in the learning process, i.e. in the process of thinking, problem solving and decision making. It allows students to think in an organized and critical way. In other words, it will make their thinking process unique. This uniqueness is called executive control - a higher level of control or self-consciousness (Suharno, 2010). This approach means to achieve constructive progress from students that allows them to develop after understanding one thing to then compare it with new things. As done by P1 in the process of learning that one way to develop English is by watching videos on YouTube that explain materials related to the English language. Based on what he is already known, the teacher can facilitate the understanding that has been obtained by the student himself to be later developed through more dialogical interactions since cognitive stress is in the use of models with high cognitive value, which develop and improve logical thinking and encourage imagination in its implementation. This approach also requires the participation of students themselves in order to transform students from passive achievers into active creators of knowledge.

### **c. Communicative Approach**

Determining appropriate strategies, methods and approaches will definitely help the students to develop their English skills. Taking into account the specific problems experienced by P3, one of the reasons why she failed to learn English at school is because the teacher was not communicative, especially while teaching online. There is less interaction between teachers and students and it becomes one of the barriers to the success of student learning. An important part of CLT is to promote fluent use of English through assignment. According to Bygate (2001 cited in Carter & Nunan, 2001) the communication approach is intended to provide assignments that enable students to use language to communicate meaning without regard to accuracy. This activity begins with a verbal assignment. For instance, when teacher asks students to talk to their classmates about the weather in front of the class. However, it is way much better to not expect students to be perfect so that students can express their thoughts without fear of making mistakes. This activity needs to be repeated as it is beneficial for expecting fluency, accuracy, and complexity and this can help students to be familiar and use English as habit (Bygate, 2001 cited in Carter & Nunan, 2001). The communicative approach requires a social approach in which teachers should be able to adapt and engage with the student dimension. One simple thing to do is start with the teacher to use English in front of students as a role model because young learners will always adapt what they see and hear. The key principles of this approach are its concern on (a) all communicative components, (b) student's engagement in using language as meaningful purposes, (c) language fluency and accuracy, (d) student's opportunity to experience their own language learning process, (e) the teacher performs as the facilitator who provide assistance and guidance for students. Even though communicative issues were only delivered directly by P3, it doesn't mean that P2 and P1 or even other students don't need this approach. They absolutely do.

### **CONCLUSION**

The reality of TEYL in Indonesia is indeed complicated. In addition to understanding the concept of children's language learning, education is also closely linked to policy, which means that curriculum journey become one of the factors in the sustainability of English language education in Indonesia. Although the educational policy goes through many dynamics, particularly ELT, this research captures the importance of English subject at school from the student's perspective from different primary schools. They personally believe that English is crucial for the next level of academic preparation and also for obtaining scholarships to study abroad. However, according to their confession, teaching English in schools is not enough and they still have difficulties in macro and micro skills. Thus, they decide to study English in the courses. In fact, one of them had not been able to learn English since the first grade. Furthermore, they also asserted how the ideal English teacher would make them feel comfortable learning. Based on the results of the classification, three participants expected to be taught by teachers who have pedagogical, personal and social competencies. In addition, the researcher presents several approaches of learning English to respond to student's learning difficulties and what the ideal teacher should implement in for a good teaching performance. This study is expected to provide teachers and policy makers with a complete picture of the reality of TEYL in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study is also expected to be a trigger for future researchers to bring more complex results.

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