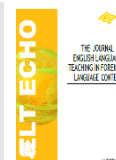




ELT Echo : The Journal of English Language Teaching in Foreign Language Context

journal homepage: <https://syekhnurjati.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/eltecho>



TEYL IN INDONESIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: WHY, WHO, WHAT, AND HOW?

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article info

Article History

Received: 14 November 2022

Received in revised form: 07

December 2022

Accepted: 28 December 2022

Available online: 28 December 2022

Keywords:

TEYL

Elementary school

2013 Curriculum

Merdeka Curriculum

abstract

English has been eliminated as a compulsory subject in elementary school and replaced with an extracurricular (2013 Curriculum) and elective subject (*Merdeka* Curriculum). This study is to investigate the Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in elementary schools. An online survey was randomly distributed and responded by 112 teachers from 74 schools in 13 districts (in 5 provinces in Indonesia). The study's samples included 94 English teachers from 66 schools. The questionnaire was designed by providing both closed-response and open-response questions. The data from closed-ended questions was quantitatively examined to determine percentages and frequencies. The data from open-response questions, on the other hand, were investigated qualitatively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Despite the pros and cons of the newest curricula, most schools (89% of 74) teach English to students. It was because English is vital for futures; students need to be taught English early; and ensuring that school is not left behind others. Homeroom teachers (61%), specialized English teachers (32%), and English teachers with no relevant educational background (7%) are among those who teach English. The top three teaching topics were vocabulary, grammar, and writing, as stated by 64 teachers (68%), 15 teachers (16%), and 7 teachers (7%), respectively. "Song" was voted 68 times to be used in English class, "Games" was chosen 60 times, "Lecture" was elected 57 times, and "Dialogue/Conversation" received the fewest votes (12 times). TEYL in elementary schools should consider not only the fixed curriculum but also the teachers' preparedness.

INTRODUCTION

Elementary education should be seen as a critical stage in the educational process that determines the quality of subsequent levels. One of its highlights is that it serves as a first step toward introducing the universal language of communication, English, to young learners (TEYL). Unfortunately, teaching English to elementary students is not required, as seen by the elimination of English as a compulsory subject from the most recent Indonesian curriculum (the 2013 and *Merdeka* curricula). English is designated as an extracurricular or optional subject, and the guidelines and support are no longer provided by the government. The elimination has left the English language in an uncertain position for the primary level, resulting in differences in its implementation between schools. They address topics such as inclusion in the school curriculum, teachers in charge, class material, teaching methods, and so on.

In terms of education, Indonesia is the only Southeast Asian country that has not made English a compulsory subject in elementary school (Astuti & Lukman, 2019). The majority of

the teachers wished the government would reinstate the policy making English a compulsory subject (Jazuly et al., 2019; Kustini, 2019) in primary schools. There are three roles for English education in Indonesia, namely as a method of international communication, a tool for developing the Indonesian language, and a tool for employing modern science and technology for development (Sholeh & Anam, 2020). Regarding these, English teaching should be properly implemented.

Making a lesson plan is the first stage in developing the *Merdeka* Curriculum skills in the English learning process (Damayanti & Muhroji, 2022). Only professionally trained teachers may achieve this. In fact, many primary schools begin teaching English to students without constructing a solid curriculum or even having certified teachers. The emphasis is mostly on preparing students for the test rather than developing their communication abilities. Furthermore, the people in charge of teaching this topic are not always certified English teachers. There has been no agreement on how English instruction should be conducted.

This is due to the fact that the most recent curriculum has certain pros and cons. The government was viewed as effective in developing the curriculum, although it was limited in its application (Pratikno et al., 2022). General educators are prepared to administer the *Merdeka* Curriculum, but with limited comprehension (Afandi et al., 2022). In reality, a solid knowledge of implementation is very necessary for teachers to be successful in the classroom (Maba & Mantra, 2018). The engagement of the teaching and learning processes as a guideline in setting the aims and direction of education in the future is one approach to attaining learning.

Despite the fact that schools are not prepared to include English as part of the curriculum, the majority of them demand students study English with limited intervention in many areas. They include a lack of qualified human resources with an English educational background, adequate facilities, and a linguistic environment (Kuwat & Ghozali, 2018). It also means that good learning facilities for good subjects are no longer supported (Kurniati et al., 2021).

Many studies have been undertaken on these topics, but few have gone into further depth on elementary schools' reactions to the new policy on teaching English to young learners. This research investigates not only whether schools include English in the primary school curriculum, but also who teaches it, what is taught, and how it is taught.

METHOD

The purpose of this research is to look into how teaching English to young learners (TEYL) is carried out in response to the Indonesian 2013 Curriculum and *Merdeka* Curriculum, which state that English in elementary school is not a mandatory subject but rather an extracurricular or elective topic. An online survey using Google Form questionnaire was randomly distributed and responded by 112 teachers from 74 schools in 13 districts (in 5 provinces of Indonesia). The study's samples included 94 instructors who are in charge of teaching English in 66 schools. The questionnaire was developed to address the following research questions:

1. Do schools include English in their curriculum? Why?
2. Who teaches English if the schools do so?
3. What is mostly taught in English classes?
4. How the teaching and learning process is mostly conducted?

The questionnaire is written in Indonesian so that teachers can easily answer the questions. The first question is a closed-response question that may be answered by clicking

Yes or No. It is followed by an open answer in the next part, which inquires about the school's reasons for adding English to the curriculum. The second and third questions are multiple-choice. To follow up on the second question, which asked teachers for their thoughts on teaching English to young learners, an open answer was supplied. The fourth question is a checkbox question, which allows respondents to select more than one choice if necessary, and an open-response option labeled "other" is also accessible for this question to provide any more remarks if possible.

The data from Yes/No and multiple-choice questions were statistically evaluated to determine the percentage. The frequency of the teachers' answers was determined by examining the checkbox questions. The data from the open responses, on the other hand, were qualitatively examined through reduction, display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Finally, the three most commonly cited responses provided by respondents were presented to illustrate the findings of the qualitative data analysis.

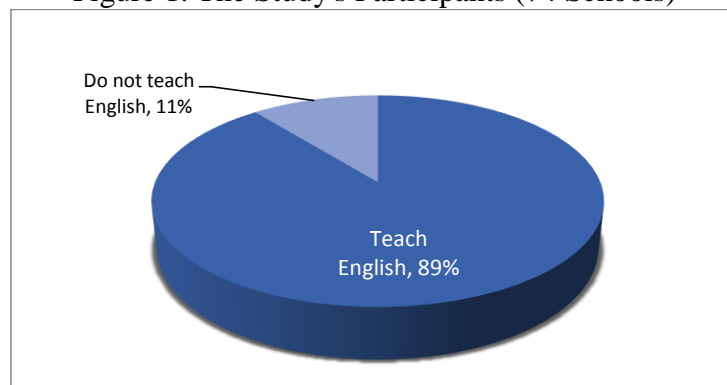
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As stated in the preceding chapter, the study's population consisted of 112 teachers from 74 schools in 13 districts (in 5 provinces of Indonesia). Not all of these schools provide English to their students. The findings of the results are represented in the following description.

Do schools include English in their curriculum? Why?

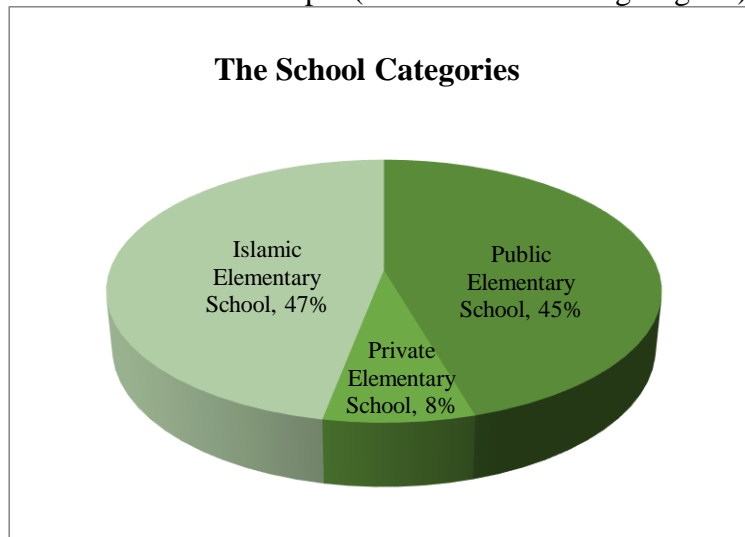
Despite the fact that English is an extracurricular subject in Indonesian elementary schools (the 2013 Indonesian Curriculum) and an optional subject dependent on the school's human resource readiness (the *Merdeka* Curriculum), most schools continue to include English in their curriculum. It was discovered that 66 of 74 schools (89%) integrate English into their educational curriculum. Otherwise, the remaining 8 schools (11%) do not require students to learn English. The study's population is depicted in the picture below:

Figure 1. The Study's Participants (74 Schools)



As shown in the figure below, the schools teaching English to students comprise 30 public elementary schools, 5 private elementary schools, and 31 Islamic elementary schools.

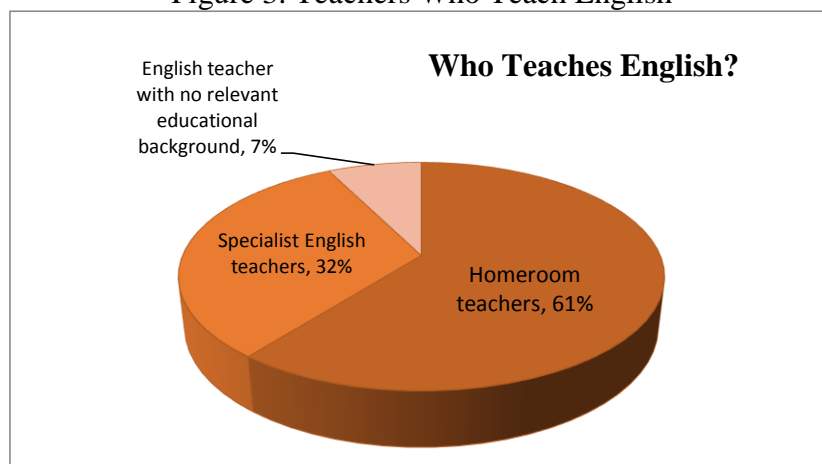
Figure 2. The Research Sample (66 Schools Teaching English)



Additional remarks about the reasons for adding English in the curriculum were also offered. They are the belief that learning English will be crucial for students' futures, the effort made by schools to start teaching English at a young age, and the fact that their institutions keep up with other educational institutions. These explanations were consistent with the findings of prior investigations (Herwiana & Laeli, 2019; Milawati, 2019). Other motivations for teaching English include the notion of English as a method to introduce a foreign language, as a worldwide instrument of communication, to prepare students for secondary school, and to prepare them for Science and Math Olympiads (Meisani & Musthafa, 2019).

Who teaches English if the schools do so?

Figure 3. Teachers Who Teach English



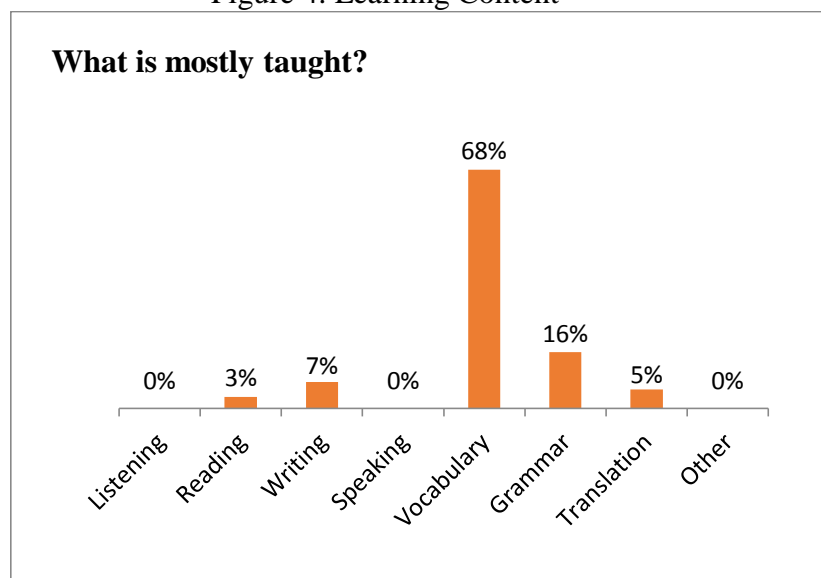
According to the statistics, 94 English instructors from 66 schools that include English as part of their curriculum were divided into three groups: 57 homeroom teachers (61%), 30 specialized English teachers (32%), and 7 English teachers (7%) with no English educational experience.

Teachers supplied additional remarks by writing comments about teaching English to young learners. The teachers experienced several issues, including: 1) a lack of readiness to

teach English, 2) a lack of English teaching skills, and 3) a lack of English competency. To conclude, the concerns are connected to teachers' lack of readiness as implementers in the classroom (Maba & Mantra, 2018).

What is mostly taught in English class?

Figure 4. Learning Content



The third question is a multiple-choice question concerning the most common lesson offered in English class. Listening, reading, writing, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, translation, and "other" are among the options provided. The English class was taught by 64 teachers (68%) who focused on vocabulary, 15 teachers (16%) who taught grammar, and 7 teachers (7%) who taught writing. Meanwhile, 5 teachers (5%) and 3 teachers (3%), respectively, taught translation and reading. No teacher chose to emphasize listening, speaking, or other skills when teaching English to students.

The findings are mainly consistent with earlier research. Vocabulary and grammar become major themes in English teaching (Herwiana & Laeli, 2019). It was similarly comparable to another research finding (Sholeh & Anam, 2020), though there were distinctions detected through the integration of vocabulary, sentence construction, and translation based on class level. On the other hand, there was some overlap in that teaching vocabulary was also an emphasis in teaching English to young learners, but not grammar, which was not advised to be taught (Astuti & Lukman, 2019).

Unfortunately, the research findings did not correspond to the curriculum expectations. The 2013 Curriculum emphasizes language competency as a communication tool for conveying ideas and information, which means that grammar and language structure are no longer prioritized in the topics being taught (Dzulkifli Isadaud et al., 2022; Maba & Mantra, 2018). To summarize, productive skills (writing and speaking) are more focused, while receptive skills (listening and reading) are strengthened and honed. It can be noted that the teachers do not appear to be very innovative in selecting appropriate learning resources (Maba & Mantra, 2018) and prefer to deliver English theory rather than English skills (Dzulkifli Isadaud et al., 2022).

How is the teaching and learning process mostly conducted?

Teachers are given five alternatives for answering this question: lecture, games, song, dialogue or conversation, using Indonesian, using English, using mixed languages (Indonesian and English), and other. Teachers are given the option of selecting more than one option from the previous seven selections. However, under the "other" option, they can provide extra information or comment if necessary. The data in the table below indicate how English teaching learning is carried out.

Table 1. Teaching Learning Process

Teaching Learning Process	Frequency	Unit	Percentage
Lecture	57	times	-
Games,	60	times	-
Song	68	times	-
Dialogue / conversation	12	times	-
Using Indonesian	56	teachers	60%
Using English	18	teachers	19%
Using mixed languages (Indonesian and English)	20	teachers	21%

"Song" was chosen 68 times to be used in teaching English, "Games" was chosen 60 times, "Lecture" was chosen 57 times, and "Dialogue/Conversation" received the fewest votes (12 times). Furthermore, various teachers used different languages. The majority of teachers (56, or 60%) chose Indonesian as the medium of instruction for English classes; 18 teachers (19%) utilized English, and 20 teachers (21%) used a combination of Indonesian and English.

The usage of games and songs in this study was consistent with earlier research findings (Prastha et al., 2022) but differed from another (Herwiana & Laeli, 2019) that indicated they were rarely utilized in the study (Milawati, 2019) but discovered that films and photographs were largely used. Another study found that the most common strategies used by teachers in primary schools for teaching English include discussion, written projects, dialogues, and conversation (Erfan, 2018). Teachers said in the "alternative" option section that translating English words into Indonesian or vice versa was commonly done throughout the teaching learning process. Furthermore, they claimed that teaching English to young learners is difficult, especially when done in English.

CONCLUSION

Despite being an extracurricular subject based on the 2013 curriculum and an optional subject based on school readiness (the *Merdeka* Curriculum), most elementary schools (89% of 112 schools) incorporate English in the curriculum. There are some reasonable considerations for including English in the curriculum because English is a future part that should be introduced as early as possible and to create prestigious schools so as not to be left behind. Homeroom teachers took the highest position of the 57 teachers (61%) who are in charge of teaching English, followed by 30 specialist English teachers (32%) with relevant educational backgrounds and 7 English teachers (7%) with no educational backgrounds in English. The teaching-learning process generally focuses on vocabulary, as stated by 68% of teachers, followed by grammar and writing, as mentioned by 16% and 7% of the teachers, respectively. On the other hand, songs, games, and lecture are the preferred ways of teaching in class while using *Bahasa Indonesia* as the common language favorably chosen by the teachers (60%) and using English and mixed language chose by 19% and 20% of the teachers,

successively. The finding of the study leads to some recommendations: teaching English to young learners has some consequences, not only related to the fixed curriculum but also related to the effort of preparing teachers. Teaching English should be done by qualified English teachers with relevant educational backgrounds and good English proficiency and English teaching skills. The teaching topics and materials should be matched to the needs of the curriculum and community progress. And the teaching and learning process should be conducted in an interactive and communicative manner to support students' achievement.

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