

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Since the Indonesian National Curriculum 2013 of primary school Indonesia does not include English as a compulsory subject or as a local content, unlike the previous one, the teaching of English to young learners varies from one school to another. It is different with the trend of teaching English to young learners globally.

In recent years, there is a marked increase in the teaching of English as a foreign language at the primary level in many countries (Rixon, 1999). In many countries around the world, English is now becoming a compulsory subject in primary education (Nikolov, 2009a; Pinter, 2006). However, curricula and practices are often being developed and almost vary in every country according to the policy maker in its educational field.

English has become a tool for international communication in transportation, commerce, banking, tourism, technology, diplomacy, and scientific research. Based on the fact, it is appropriate that English is included in the local content of school-based curriculum in primary school. Therefore, it is necessary to think the system of teaching and learning of English to young learners (primary school students) to gain an optimal result.

Rendering an English lesson to the students of primary school is an appropriate decision viewed from the fact that the students of primary school have a period called golden age and they have critical period, the period that children are able to learn anything easily. In this period, their brains are still flexible so that they are able to learn anything, including languages. Besides, children's attitudes to other languages and culture are open and these attitudes help the children learn the languages.

Teaching English to young learners (TEYL) was begun to be taught at primary school level in Indonesia in the 1994 Curriculum (Indonesia Ministry of Education Decree number 060/U/1993). Based on the decision of Indonesian

ministry of education English could be taught in primary schools as a local content. The decentralization of education in Indonesia has encouraged local governments to make their own decisions relative to some portion of curricular space in the form of the use of some learning hours for what has become known as “local contents” (Jalal & Musthafa, 2001). As result of this decentralized decision-making, since last decade, public interest in English for Young Learners (EYL) has become enhanced. Many primary schools especially in big cities conducted English at schools. Since the 2013 curriculum was launched in primary schools, English was not included as a local content (Curriculum structure of 2013 curriculum). However, English could be taught as an extracurricular. In reality, some schools still conducted English in the intra curricular. It means that English was taught as a local content.

Teaching English to young learners at primary schools in Indonesia is actually to introduce students that there is another language beside their mother tongue. Therefore, English should be taught through activities which relevant to the children’s world. For example, learning vocabulary and simple sentence about things around them through singing, drawing, playing games, telling story and other children’s activities. In fact, students are assigned with translation, grammar rules, and home works with ambiguous instructions from the teacher (Suyanto, 2003).

The objectives of learning English as a foreign language are different with the objectives of learning English as a second language in other countries where English is used as a medium of communication. In Indonesia, English is a first foreign language to be taught in secondary schools or *sekolah menengah pertama* (SMP), while teaching English in primary schools is only a local content or even as an extracurricular in the present curriculum. It is not mandatory to administer English as a lesson subject at school.

It had been done by many researchers about teaching English to young learners (TEYL). It is very important for the development of TEYL because the data in the field could reveal the reality in the field as a result of the policy being enforced. A research conducted by Suyanto (2001) on TEYL concluded that teachers are the executor that could interpret goal, methodology, material, and

evaluation becoming practical activities in English classrooms. Therefore, primary school teachers had to have adequate skills and techniques to teach English to young learners. There were some facts on teaching English to young learners in Indonesia. First, there are many commercial materials on the market, but it is not many of them suitable for students to be used. Therefore, teachers need to choose the appropriate book to be used in accordance with the objectives, content, language, and level of difficulty.

Secondly, primary school English teachers lack professional support and opportunities for in-service training at primary schools (Musthafa, 2010). It is because most of the English teachers' background in primary schools are not coming from English education. The third is that there is no English syllabus for primary schools equipped with teaching material, instruction or teachers and its media. The last finding is that not all English education program in the universities administers English for Young Learners as a special subject in the program. It will impact to the graduates of English department which have no adequate skill to teach young children.

Looking at the condition of TEYL in Indonesia, the researcher is interested to investigate the practice and the implementation of teaching English to young learners in primary schools. The researcher chose primary schools in Bandung as the sample of the research because Bandung is one of big cities in Indonesia which recommended English as the preferred local content to be taught in primary schools.

Based on the data from Bandung education office, Bandung city has 460 primary schools. 274 schools are public school and 186 schools are private school. Even English is not included in the curriculum structure of National Curriculum 2013 of primary school, the head of Bandung education office suggested all schools to conduct English as a local content or as an extracurricular at school. However, the implementation of English teaching at school is authorized by the school teachers. The teachers who teach English in their school need to develop the curriculum and its implementation in the classroom. Consequently, the implementation of English teaching will be difference between one school to

another. It depends on the school resources, especially teachers' competence and school's facilities.

This study discusses the implementation of English teaching in primary schools. It is to know how the implementation of English teaching to young learners at primary schools since the 2013 curriculum was applied in primary schools in Indonesia. It is also to know the supports and the challenges of TEYL implementation at schools. This research involved 30 primary schools both public and private schools to be investigated that represent the portray of the EYL implementation at primary schools in Bandung city.

The researcher took the data randomly by territory. Involving five public schools and one private school in each territory (East Bandung, West Bandung, North Bandung, South Bandung, and Middle Bandung), it was expected to portray the real practice of the TEYL implementation at primary schools in entirely Bandung city. After knowing the general information of the TEYL implementation at schools, the researcher chose four schools to be deeply investigated. It is to know the planning, the process and the assessment of teaching English to young learners at primary schools. It is also to know the challenges of teaching English to young learners at primary schools in Bandung city.

### **1.1 Statements of the problem**

Based on the previous discussion on the current situation of English language teaching in primary schools in Indonesian context, this study addresses the following questions:

1. How was the teaching of English conducted at primary school level in Bandung? This research question is elaborated as follows:
  - a. What do the teachers do before teaching English at primary schools?
  - b. How do the teachers carry out the process of the program?
  - c. How do the teachers evaluate the teaching program in the classroom?

2. What are the challenges perceived by the teachers in teaching English at primary schools?

## **1.2 Purposes of the problem**

The overall aim of this study is to investigate the practices and challenges of TEYL in primary schools. The chief aims are to:

1. Investigate the practice of teaching English to young learners at primary schools.
2. Investigate the challenges of teaching English at primary schools.

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

This study is expecting to have significant to the teaching English to young learners in primary schools. Schools and teachers need to design and develop curriculum since the government give the authority to develop the program by the teachers. The lack of skill in teaching English to young learners will become obstacles for the teachers to deliver English to the students in the teaching process.

The researcher portrayed the implementation of TEYL in primary schools. By looking at the implementation of TEYL from different schools, teachers may adapt or adopt the model of the TEYL implementation in the school context and implement them in their school as it is appropriate to be implemented.

## **1.1 Clarification of terms**

Four key terms must be clarified to avoid misconception and misunderstanding of the concepts underlying this study. The following definitions would be helpful in this regard:

1. Young Learners in this study refer to English language learners who are viewed from two perspectives: school grade and age. In term of school grade, young language learners are children who are at their first six years of primary

school. While in term of age, young language learners are students who are about 6 to 14 years of age.

2. Teaching English to young learners in this study refers to the practice of teaching English at primary schools.
3. Practices in this study refers to the teaching and learning activities which include planning, process, and evaluation.
4. Challenges in this study refer to the school and teachers' problem in teaching English at primary schools.

