

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research by discussing the background, research questions, research purposes, research significances, framework, and previous related studies.

A. Background

This study intends to find out how a teacher reflects on their experience of teaching English to young learners (TEYL) during the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes the convenience and the barriers in one of the elementary schools in Subang, Indonesia. This study is critical because the teaching challenges are increasing in the pandemic that forces many classes to be conducted online, including EYL. Zainollah (2016) states that there are some strategies can be practiced in teaching English to young learners are; a) Teaching with Pictures, Visuals, and Realia, b) Teaching with Movements and Games, c) Teaching with Music or Songs. This research may be slightly different from the theory above because the research focuses on the strategies used by teachers to teach young learners during the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires online learning. According to Suputra (2020), several challenges arise in the learning process during the pandemic. First, students' financial background considerably affects their readiness in an online class. Students coming from low-income families are struggling to have compatible gadgets and internet quotas. Other problems include poor internet connections and teachers'/students' time management.

Teaching young learners is not an easy thing. Many things must be considered, such as the characteristics of young learners, the principles of teaching young learners, the learning style of each student, and providing exciting and diverse activities. Garton and Copland (2018) state that not all teachers can interact with young learners who are still developing their cognition and emotion, more than that, teaching young learners is a very different and more challenging experience than teaching adults (Prihatin et al. 2021).

The preliminary observation is carried out in an elementary school in Subang, West Java. Based on these initial observations, it has finds that the main problem in the online learning process is the limited number of students who have smartphones, making it difficult for teachers to conduct online meetings and distribute materials or assignments. Therefore, the school and the teacher do an alternative way continue learning by forming study groups in

zoning. Then, the teacher comes to each study group on a predetermined schedule. This research is very fundamental because the results of this study can be a solution or reference for teachers in the surrounding area and also have the same problem, that is the small number of students who have smartphones.

In the past five years, many studies about TEYL have been done. They are concerned with the implementation of TEYL, including its methods, perspectives, and strategies. For example, Research by Jazuly & Indrayani (2018) about guidance teaching English to very young learners, research by Hartatik and Bia'yuni (2020) about teaching pre-school students during COVID-19, research by Lestari, Asrori & Sulistyawati (2019) about English teaching strategies for young learners in an international primary school, research from Putri, et al (2020) about the impact of COVID-19 on teaching in one of the primary schools in Indonesia and research by Wulandari et al. (2020) about strategies implemented to teaching English for young learners. The present study has different concerns from the previous studies. It focuses on online TEYL, particularly the teacher's experience of online TEYL, convenience, and barriers. Research on online TEYL remains limited. Therefore, this research promises in-depth theoretical and practical explorations.

B. Research Questions

From the research background, this research is formulated to answer the question:

1. How does the teacher reflect on their strategies of EYL online teaching?
2. What convenience does the teacher experience during their EYL online teaching?
3. What challenges does the teacher find during their EYL online teaching?

C. Research Purposes

From the research questions above, this study aimed to:

1. To find out how the teacher reflects on their strategies of EYL online teaching.
2. To find out the conveniences the teacher experiences during their EYL online teaching.
3. To find out the challenges the teacher finds during their EYL online teaching.

D. The significance of the research

This study is beneficial in two aspects, and it is theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research is helpful for English teachers and prospective English teachers for young learners. The teacher's experience presented in this study can reference teaching young

learners online if circumstances require. Practically, because how teachers reflect on their experiences and teaching strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is the result of this research, can affect the teaching process of teachers in the future so that the learning process can still be carried out by all teachers and schools who initially had obstacles related to the implementation of learning during the pandemic.

E. Research Framework

1. English for Young learners

(a) Definition of young learners

According to Nunan (2010), the age range in young learners is still being debated. Some experts mention ages 3-5, some say ages 5-8, and so on. Meanwhile, according to (Garton & Copland, 2018), "Young learners are primary school children, with an age 5-12". Cameron (2001), cited in (Tiwery, 2020) stated that young learners are learners aged in the range of five to twelve years. In other words, young learners are learners who study in pre-school until elementary school.

(b) Characteristics of young learners

Young learners have their characteristics, which are different from adolescents or adult learners. According to Harmer (2010), characteristics of young learners are: young learners respond even if they do not understand individual words, often learn indirectly than directly, young learners understanding not just come up from explanation but also from what they see and hear, they generally display an enthusiasm for learning and curiosity around them, they need attention and approval from their teacher, they like talking about themselves, and have a short attention span, learn through repetition and imitate sounds of the target language.

(c) Principles of teaching English to young learners

English for young learners is still a topic of debate because educating children is always thought to be a simple task, but it is challenging. Many experiments have looked at the best pedagogy, processes, and techniques for young students. Garton and Copland (2018) stated that in teaching English to young learners, teachers need to be proven with extensive and continuous exposure to language contextualized in meaningful and

enjoyable ways and encouraged to communicate through purposeful, real here-and-now experiences. It is important to make tasks shorter, varied, motivated, and attractive.

(d) Strategies to teaching English for young learners

According to Lestari et al. (2019), some strategies are implemented in teaching English to primary schools. Those are ice breaking, recalling the memory, brainstorming, class discussion, games, listening and reading, listening and matching, drawing and writing, writing paragraphs, the use of the fill in the blank, writing vocabulary, and concluding the material. Wulandari (2020) briefly states six strategies used by the teacher in teaching English for young learners: Listen and repeat, listen and do, questioning and answer, in pairs, cooperative learning, and there are also games.

2. Online learning

Online learning is learning various technologies such as the world wide web, email, group, and new texts, audio and video conferencing, which is sent over computer networks to provide education to all students (Dhull, Indira, and Sakshi 2017). Sari (2020) state online learning supports proper applications in learning English such as Edmodo, WhatsApp, Google classroom and others. These applications can be use to memorize English using the internet.

3. Narrative inquiry method

A narrative inquiry, which is the participants' stories, is organized and interpreted using a narrative structure. It contributed to a better understanding of the participants as people and as narrators concerning their professional identities. Narrative inquiry is relevant because they wanted to learn how participants in advanced education are coping with the transition to a new professional position and the effects of this adjustment (Sunday, Ramugondo, and Kathard 2020).

F. Previous study

Many previous related studies investigated TEYL. Five of them are reported by the followings. Three studies are face-to-face, and two studies are in online situations.

The first is by Jazuly &Indrayani (2018). This research examines the guide to teach English to very young learners. It was qualitative research. The instruments used in this research are observation, interview, and presentation. The study involved 24 teachers from four kindergartens, who were one male and twenty-three females. Research results are: these

are some kinds of teaching techniques of teaching English to a young learner (TEYL) that can be used and selected by kindergarten teachers or early childhood education teachers. There are Listen and Repeat, Listen and Do, Question and Answer, Substitution, Draw and Color, Listen and Identify, See Differences, and In-Pair Activities (In-pair).

The second is by Lestari, Asrori & Sulistyawati (2019). This research discusses English teaching strategies for young learners in an international primary school in Surakarta. This research aims to investigate the English teaching strategies implemented in terms of teaching planning, implementation, and assessment, and the students' responses towards the implementation of the teaching strategies. This research is qualitative that uses a case study method. The study participants are homeroom teacher and 24 fifth-grade students in which all of them are male. As a result of this research, there are four strategies in teaching planning. Those are curriculum, documents, teacher's professional development, and students' seat arrangement. While in the teaching implementation, there are sixteen strategies. They are icebreaking, recalling the memory, brainstorming, discussion, game, listen and read, listen and match, draw and write, write a paragraph, filling the blank, vocabulary writing, concluding material, police of English, reading time, English camp, and assembly. Besides, there are five strategies in the teaching assessment. Those are daily tests, vocabulary tests, mid-term examination, final examination, and International Progression Test (IPT). Then, the students' responses toward the implementation of the teaching strategies are that their participation, understanding, memory, interest, and motivation increased during the learning process.

The third is by Wulandari, Ratminingsih & Ramendra (2020). This research discusses strategies for teaching English for young learners. This research aims to identify the English teaching strategies by a fifth grade English teachers and the problems encountered by the teacher in teaching English for young learners. This research used a descriptive qualitative method and used observation and interview as the instruments. The research participant is an English teacher in SD Suta Dharma. The result of this research shows that teacher applied eight strategies in teaching English. They are: listen and repeat, listen and do question and answer, in-pair, cooperative learning, and games. The most frequently used teachers' strategies are Listen and Repeat, Listen and do, and Question and Answer.

The fourth is by Hartatik and Bia'yuni (2020). This research is intended to describe how the teaching and learning process took place during the COVID-19 outbreak. This research

focused on the teaching and learning process at the pre-school level. This research used the qualitative method. Participants of this research are pre-school teachers in one of the Play Group and Kindergarten schools in Malang. The result of this research is that all teachers used WhatsApp to get themselves connected to their students. In addition, they also send the student workbook to their students' houses. In addition, two teachers needed to teach some students in the classroom as learning from home did not work for their students. The numbers of the students and the meetings, of course, were limited.

The fifth is by Putri et al. (2020). This research aims to identify the constraints of the online teaching and learning process at home due to the unprecedented situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. This research a qualitative approach with the case study method and used the semi-structured interview as the instrument. Participants in this research were 15 teachers and parents of two primary schools in Tangerang, Indonesia. This research shows that parents saw the problems as more related to a lack of learning discipline at home, more time spent assisting their children's learning at home - especially for children below Grade 4 in Primary School, a lack of technology skills, and higher internet bills. Teachers identified more challenges and constraints, including some restrictions in the choices of teaching methods that are usually applied in a regular face-to-face class, less coverage of curriculum content, lack of technology skills that hinder the potential of online learning. Moreover, there also appear challenges such as the lack of e-resources in the Indonesian language resulting in more time needed to develop e-contents, longer screen time as a result of e-content creating and giving feedback on students' work, more intense and time-consuming communication with parents, the challenge for better coordination with colleague teachers, principals, and a higher internet bill.

The studies above discussed TEYL in face-to-face and online situations. Therefore, this present study raises the issue. The gap between this study and the previous studies is the online situation, which happens in an area where not everyone has a smartphone. It becomes tough to do online learning, and the method in this study is a qualitative with a narrative inquiry approach, which offers a complete picture of how TEYL is done from the teacher's point of view and reports what the teacher's needs and challenges are.