

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

In 2013 before the advent of the Merdeka curriculum, English was not a compulsory subject. Many experts and English teachers who have concerns about the importance of English are worried about the loss of students' motivation to learn English. Given the rapid development of the times and the demand for mastering English is directly proportional, the Indonesia minister of education, Nadiem Makarim, through his latest curriculum breakthrough has made English a subject and no longer local content. Even though there are several elementary schools that have implemented the English subject for a long time. However, the percentage is relatively small compared to those who have not applied the English subject.

The implementation of the English subject in elementary school which is mandated by the Merdeka Curriculum should be appreciated. What's more, the background of this implementation was a prior evaluation of the implementation of the English subject in junior high schools.

In the Merdeka Curriculum, all schools have the freedom to develop their curriculum based on the needs and social context in their school's region. English is not a required subject in Elementary School, but the urgency of learning English is a strong motivation for educational units to teach English according to the development of the language according to age. The earlier children are introduced to English, the easier it will be to teach English at the next level.

Goorhuis-Brouwer and de Bot (2010) stated that teaching English at early age can help students to gain proficiency by the end of elementary level, but it depends on the exposure (Graham, Courtney, Marinis, & Tonkyn, 2017). It is believed that early start in learning English can help to lead to better outcomes (Murphy, 2014; Hopp, H., Vogelbacher, M., Kieseier, T., & Thoma, D, 2019).

Teaching English to kindergarten students has many benefits, including that kindergarten students are at the golden age where children aged 3-6 have a greater ability to absorb new languages. They will also have an easier time learning English at the next level, such as in Elementary School, which has already made English a subject and not just a local elective.

One easy lesson to teach young children is teaching vocabulary. The teaching of English as a foreign language to young students starts with introducing vocabulary. Vocabulary refers to the words and their meanings in a language. It is a fundamental aspect of learning any language, including English for non-native speakers. Brown (1995) defined vocabulary as a collection of words specific to a language. Vocabulary, as a core component of language plays a significant role in teaching English. McCharty (in Rully, 2009) noted that learning a language without a sufficient vocabulary can result in an ineffective form of communication. Furthermore, vocabulary is essential as the foundation for the four language skills: writing, speaking, listening, and reading. (Schmitt and McCharty, 1997). Richard and Willis (2002) added that the importance of vocabulary in language learning cannot be overstated. It is a fundamental aspect of language and is essential for language learners. This demonstrates the importance of vocabulary in both written and spoken communication.

In teaching vocabulary to young learners, it is important to focus on the word form and meaning, and to use visual techniques such as pictures and real objects to aid learners in the learning process. The use of a dictionary can also be helpful for them to understand new words. The teacher plays a crucial role in building the vocabulary of young learners, but it is important to note that teaching vocabulary to children is different from teaching adults due to their unique needs, competencies, and cognitive skills (Harmer, 2001). Therefore, teachers should consider appropriate approaches, methods, techniques, and strategies when conveying materials to young learners that take into account the characteristics of children.

Teaching English vocabulary at early age has so many benefits. Any children, regardless of their background or heritage, have the ability to learn any language that they are exposed to (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003). The brains of young children are highly adaptable and naturally inclined to learn language. They can become fluent in a new language as easily as they learn to walk. In contrast, adults must learn language through explicit study of grammar rules and often struggle to achieve native-like fluency. Research suggests that exposing children to multiple languages can help to strengthen their brains and improve their language learning abilities. It is therefore best to begin learning a new language at an early age.

According to Brown (1994) one of the reasons that children may be more successful in achieving native-like pronunciation when learning a new language is due to their developing speech muscles. The process of speaking requires the coordination of many muscles, and children's muscles are more adaptable than those of adults. This advantage is similar to that seen in athletes who begin training at a young age.

The flexibility given in Merdeka curriculum has helped many schools to develop their own curriculum including teaching English at any level like in early childhood education. Each school is required to develop a curriculum and teaching materials based on guidelines issued by the government and tailored to the needs of the school itself. In the 2022-2023 school year, many PAUD schools were registered as schools that applied the Merdeka Curriculum, one of which is TK IT MTA Polanharjo.

TK IT MTA Polanharjo is one of the schools that before the Merdeka Curriculum had already taught basic English vocabulary and was then designated as a school that must apply the Merdeka Curriculum. From there, this research wants to know what techniques are used in teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten students and whether there are any changes from the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English vocabulary.

B. Problem Statement

The research questions on this study are:

- 1) What techniques are used in teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten students of TK IT MTA Polanharjo?
- 2) What are the changes from the 2013 curriculum and Merdeka curriculum in teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten students of TK IT MTA Polanharjo?

C. Limitation of the Study

The researcher concerns on teachers' technique in teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten students and the data also limited in B grade kindergarten students of TK IT MTA Polanharjo.

D. Objective of the Study

Based on the problem statement above, there are two aims of this study, as follows:

1. To identify the techniques used in teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten students of TK IT MTA Polanharjo.
2. To know the changes from the 2013 curriculum and Merdeka curriculum in teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten students of TK IT MTA Polanharjo.

E. Benefits of Study

This research aims to contribute to the field of English language learning, specifically in the area of speaking skills. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide both theoretical and practical benefits.

1. Theoretical benefits

This research provides information about techniques teachers use for teaching vocabulary to kindergarten students in Merdeka curriculum and difference between previous curriculum and current curriculum. It can be helpful for improving teaching techniques, particularly for teaching

vocabulary. The writer hopes that this research can serve as a reference for similar studies in the future.

2. Practical benefits
 - a. For teachers

The writer hopes that the findings of this study will be beneficial for other teachers in developing techniques for teaching vocabulary, particularly for kindergarten students, in order to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and enjoyment of teaching and learning.

- b. For students

By using appropriate techniques, the writer hopes to create a pleasant environment for teaching and learning, in which the students do not feel pressured to learn English but rather enjoy the learning process.