

## **Teachers' Difficulties on the Implementation of English as a Medium of Instruction for Young Learners**

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### **Abstract**

The research was conducted to find out teachers' difficulties on the implementation of English as a medium of instruction for young learners. This study used a qualitative method. The participants in this research were recruited from the teachers at SD Palm Kids Lubuklinggau who teach non English subjects by using English. Two teachers were selected to be the participants in this research based on the consideration. In this study, the participants was selected using purposeful sampling technique. In collecting the data, the researcher used observation and interview to get several information about this research from the participants. The researcher used thematic analysis to analyzed the data about teachers' difficulties on the implementation of using English as a medium of instruction for young learners. The result of this study showed that there were several difficulties that teachers' faced on the use of English as a medium of instruction: 1) difficult in teaching non English subjects by using English; 2) difficult to select appropriate teaching methods; 3) difficult to handle students with lack of focus; and 4) difficult to handle students with lack of English proficiency. The research findings implied that the teachers who teach by using English as a medium of instruction found it difficult in several ways. As a result, they have prepared suitable teaching strategies that are expected to be understood by students and create a more enjoyable learning experience in the classroom.

**Keywords:** *English as a Medium of Instruction, Teachers' difficulties, Young Learners*

### **A. Introduction**

English is used as the international language to unite people around the world because every country in the world has a different language. McKay (2018) English has now become a global language that is highly used for cross-cultural communication at the global level today. The construct of English focuses on the condition, situation, and students' quality (Dai, 2015). English as an international language has been learned and used by millions across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In this globalization era, many people must master English as an international language.

English as a foreign language in Indonesia has already become a concern, especially in basic education, based on the realization of the importance of learning English to contend in a modern and globalized world. English in Indonesia is a foreign language, while the mother tongue is Indonesian, and it is applied to education (Liando & Tatipang, 2022). English is taught as a subject in Indonesia because English plays a major role in many sectors. English is one of the dominant languages used globally in education, business, trading, science, and hospitality. Learning English can allow students to communicate with others from different backgrounds (Arikan, 2015). In addition, English can give many benefits in social life.

The Indonesian government has changed Kurikulum 2013 to the newest curriculum named Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. This curriculum focuses on essential materials, character development, and students' competence. Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar can be used at all levels, such as elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, vocational school and college. Some changes are found in elementary schools, such as English subjects. In Kurikulum 2013, English is a local content in elementary school, but now English is a compulsory subject (Dewi et al., 2023). However, the school can consider this case by adjusting the circumstances and interests. In elementary school, English learning is expected to assist young learners in achieving their communication and life skills. English allows young learners to open insight about themselves, social relationships, culture, and global job opportunities (Artini, 2017). Therefore, English is important to be learned by young learners.

Even though English has been officially taught in all schools, English proficiency is still low because students find it difficult when students have to express their opinions in English (Rahman & Singh, 2020). Indonesia's geographical location, which is far from English-speaking countries, is also one factor that quite influences the lack of student motivation to learn English (Oktaviani, 2019). Therefore, familiarizing students with speaking English at school from a young age is important to develop students' academic and personal abilities.

Several schools in Indonesia then had already implemented English as a second language rather than just a foreign language. Currently, English is not only a school subject but has also been implemented as a medium of instruction in several educational institutions in Indonesia. Teachers have to teach one or more subjects using English as the medium of instruction (Cenoz, 2015). Furthermore, teachers are compulsory to use English during the

teaching and learning process; it is expected to have language and content competence. Teachers have to know the difficulties faced when English is applied as a school instruction medium.

Numerous research investigations have been undertaken regarding the implementation of English as a medium of instruction (Toth, 2018; Oktaviani, 2019; Tang, 2020). First, Toth (2018) conducted a study to highlights the policies, perspectives, and practices of language use in a bilingual primary class during grades 4-6, where English was the medium of instruction in several subjects. Moreover, the study conducted by Oktaviani (2019) aimed to investigate the teachers' perspectives and challenges on the application of EMI. Finally, Tang (2020) investigated about the challenges and importance of teaching using EMI faced by lectures in classroom and to see if learners receive well the material given during the learning process.

The research studies previously mentioned focus on perspectives and challenges on the use of English as a medium of instruction. Those research concentrated on the point of view about the importance, policies, and practices of language use in bilingual class and its effect on students' language performance. There have been no research investigations about teachers' difficulties on the implementation of English as a medium instruction for young learners. Thus, the researcher were interested in conducting research that focused on one research question: What are the teachers' difficulties on the implementation of English as a medium of instructions for young learners at SD Palm Kids Lubuklinggau?

## **B. Research Methodology**

This research design was qualitative research used to investigate a phenomenon and answer the research questions for this study. Qualitative research explores any information about a phenomenon, activity, or process that happens in one or more individuals (Creswell, 2014). The research design was used to know the teachers' difficulties with using EMI. It can be known from what teachers' faced during the learning process. There are 5 approaches to qualitative research. There are grounded theory, case study, phenomenology, narrative, and ethnography (Creswell, 2014). A case study is an in-depth search or exploration of activities, events, and even individuals and systems that includes considerable data collection. It is useful for developing diverse perspectives on reality and comprehending human behavior (Creswell, 2014). In addition, qualitative research with a case study was used because the

researcher was interested in teachers' experiences, and the research focused on the phenomenon of teachers' difficulties at primary school on the use of EMI.

The participants in this research were the teachers at SD Palm Kids Lubuklinggau who teach non-English subjects by using English. In this study, the participants were selected using a purposeful sampling technique. In purposeful sampling, researchers deliberately choose some people and sites to know about the base phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research should have a sampling plan that describes the sampling benchmarks, including participants, settings, events, processes and plans that align with the research objectives. It is usually used in qualitative research to acquire all of the information that the researcher needs to assist in selecting cases with the objectives.

According to the informal interview, this school is one of the schools that implements EMI. Therefore, the participants for this research were selected from the teachers at SD Palm Kids Lubuklinggau. In line with this, qualitative research is not required to have many participants (Creswell, 2014). According to the data that the school has given. The total number of teachers is 14, 8 teachers teach the fourth grade. In the fourth grade, there were 10 subjects taught, but only 3 subject teachers used EMI. The subjects are Mathematics, taught by Ms. R; Thematic Integrated and Visual/Performing Art were taught by Ms. F. Therefore, the researcher chose two teachers to participate in this research based on the consideration.

In data collection, there were two instruments, namely, interview and observation. Interview as an instrument used to aid the data collection to ensure teachers' difficulties with using EMI. The process of obtaining information for research purposes consists of some questions, and the interviewees have to answer the questions. A semi-structured interview is used for pedagogical research on language and is carried out qualitatively (Datko, 2015). In interviewing the participants, the researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews. Two teachers were interviewed in this research. In this regard, the researcher made several questions adapted from Oktaviani (2019). The researcher made 23 questions related to the theory in this paper. Furthermore, the interview was conducted to support data on using EMI in school according to teachers' views. Teachers were asked about the difficulties in the implementation of EMI. Observation was also used in this research to obtain the required data to answer the problem of the study. By holding the observation, the researcher could find out teachers' difficulties on the implementation of EMI. During observation, the researcher became a passive participant. The researcher was not involved in the subject activities in the

classroom. The researcher did the observation until the researcher got the needed data. In this process, an observation field note was used during observation. Three types of learning activities were observed, which were pre-activities, whilst activities and post-activities. The researcher took notes on the learning writing process in the classroom. Therefore, the researcher used observation and interviews to get several information about this research from the participants.

In this study, the researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data about teachers' difficulties in implementing EMI for young learners at SD Palm Kids Lubuklinggau. Using this thematic analysis, the researcher can analyse the teachers' difficulties in implementing EMI. Thematic analysis does not necessitate comprehensive theoretical and technological understanding; this makes it easily accessible, particularly for those who are just starting out (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Therefore, the researcher had to analyse the data by using thematic analysis.

There were several steps that the researcher used to interpret the data based on the thematic analysis. First, the researcher will collect the data from the interview. Then, the data will make into a transcription. Third, read the data. Next, coded the data. Fifth, make a personal interpretation and themes based on the codes. Lastly, the finding can be validated to check the accuracy (Braun and Clarke, 2021). This can lead researchers to find data, create codes, search for and define themes to review them, and then publish the report.

Based on the procedure above, the first thing to do was the researcher prepare data and search for their respective meanings depending on the source of the information. Second, the researcher read and coded all of the data. Third, the researcher searched for the themes. The data were compiled in this step by selecting the text and writing each word congregated into categories and signs based on the code. Fourth, the researcher reviewed the creation of categories or themes of analysis and description, which involved providing specific information about people, places, or events in interviews. Fifth, the researcher looked at how the descriptions and themes were represented in qualitative narratives; see detailed discussion of several interrelated themes. Finally, produce data reports in making interpretations of qualitative research results in the form of personal interpretations.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **1. Results**

After analyzing the data from the observation and interview, the researcher found that there were several difficulties that teachers faced with the use of English as a medium of instruction, such as difficulty in teaching non-English subjects using English, difficulty selecting appropriate teaching methods, difficulty handling students with lack of focus, and difficult to handle students with lack of English proficiency. The following themes were identified as follows:

### 1.1 Difficulty in teaching non English subjects by using English

From the analysis of interviews conducted on 2 teachers, one teacher with the initials F, a teacher who teaches thematic integrated, but her scientific background is in English education. The second teacher, with the initials R, teaches mathematics in English with a mathematical scientific background. Based on the data obtained from the interview, it was found that the teacher F has an English background but felt it difficult to teach thematic integrated because this is not her major. So, before the teacher teaches in the class, she has to study first and make sure that she understands the material that will be taught. As confessed by the teacher initially, F that

*“I don’t encounter difficulty in speaking English since I graduated from English Department. However, I encountered difficulty when I have to teach Thematic Integrated subject because I have to study first”* (Personal communication, March, 3rd, 2023).

In line with the information gathered during the interview, based on observation findings it seemed teacher F has lacked mastery of the material about rotation and revolution because when a student asked a question, teacher F looked a little bit confused, but she could handle it by inviting the students to discuss it together.

Another teacher who teaches Math in English initially R claimed that

*“Because I don't have an English background, the difficulty is that I have to learn how to use good English. Moreover, Math has a lot of terms in English, that needs to be studied again”* (Personal communication, March, 3rd, 2023).

In keeping with the interview results, it was observed that teacher R looked difficult when explaining the material about factors, multiples and patterns in English because there are several terms in Mathematic that made it difficult for teacher R to explain to the students.

To summarize, teachers must understand the materials and have basic skills in English to make the teaching and learning process run smoothly.

### 1.2 Difficulty to select appropriate teaching methods

Based on the data obtained from the interview, the teachers found it difficult to select appropriate teaching methods according to the learning materials. There are many choices about teaching methods to be used, because the school already provided the guidedbook, then teachers have to use the right one to be used in the class which is suitable with the learning material. As confessed by the teacher initially, F that

*“This school provided guidebook on teaching methods, thus there are many strategies that teachers can choose based on the students’ and teacher’s needs. The difficulty is on choosing the right method based on the students’ level and teaching materials”.* (Personal communication, March, 3rd, 2023).

This is in accordance with my observations in the classroom. Teacher F used more than one teaching method to ensure that all students understood the materials.

The other teacher has the same opinion as teacher F. The teacher initially R claimed that

*“To determine the learning method we already have a guideline, so there are many choices of methods that can be used, but sometimes I have difficulty in adjusting which method is suitable for the material to be taught”.* (Personal communication, March, 3rd, 2023).

This is in accordance with the observations I made in the class. Sometimes the teacher applies more than one teaching method, depending on the students’ condition. In the beginning, the teacher used the method that had been prepared, but when students still do not understand, the teacher will use another teaching method that is considered to be understood by the students. In short, teachers have to choose the right method suitable for the learning material to make students easier to understand.

### 1.3 Difficulty to handle students with lack of focus

Based on the data obtained from the interview, the teachers found it difficult to attract students' attention, because students are busy with their own things. When students do not focus with the lesson, the teachers usually using game method to make students exited in learning again. As confessed by the teacher initially, F that

*“It is difficult to attract students' attention, sometimes students are more interested in talking to their classmates than paying attention to the teacher, therefore I often use the game method to attract students' attention, and after I invite them to play the students usually focus again on learning”.* (Personal communication, March, 3rd, 2023).

Likewise, observational data showed that, while teacher F was explaining the materials, a student did not pay attention. He was busy with his own thing, then the teacher asked him to pay attention, and the teacher reexplain the material.

The other teacher has the same opinion to teacher F. The teacher initially R claimed that

*“Indeed, students are often not focused during the learning process, sometimes they prefer to do their own thing and chat with their friends. Usually when the students are not focused I will mix it up by inviting them to play games or dance together, and usually they really like it and become excited in learning again”.* (Personal communication, March, 3rd, 2023).

This was according to my observations in the class when the teachers were teaching. In the middle of the learning process, some students did not pay attention to the teachers. They were busy talking to their friends, thus making the class not conducive. The teachers tried to attract the students' attention by inviting them to play games, and after that, the students focused on the lesson again. In brief, teachers should know how to handle the students when they are not focused on the lessons.

#### 1.4 Difficulty to handle students with lack of English proficiency

Based on the data obtained from the interview, the teachers claimed that students with lack of English proficiency are hardly understood teachers' explanation and instruction in English. The teachers found there were students who did not understand when the teachers



explained materials or given assignments in English. As confessed by the teacher initially, F that

*“The difficulty is when a transfer student from another school enters this class, for example in my primary 4 class there are 2 transferees from a school who don't speak English on a daily basis, so that's the difficulty. Sometimes when I speak in English they don't understand, so like it or not I have to translate it to Indonesian first. When there is an assignment, they also sometimes don't understand, they have to translate it one by one first and they also write it difficult compared to children from grades 1-4 who already understand it. For example, if we tell them to write "drink", they already know how to write it, while children who are from outside will be confused about writing "drink", they will write "dring". That's the difficulty, so we have to spend more time on children who don't understand English”.* (Personal communication, March, 3rd, 2023).

This is in accordance with my observation in the class. When teacher F explained the whole materials in English, the teacher asked several students about what she was explaining. The teacher asked students who she thinks is not good at English, and if all students understood, the teacher would give them exercises.

The other teacher has the same opinion to teacher F. The teacher initially R claimed that

*“The difficulty is when the student does not understand when the teacher explains or asks questions in English the teacher has to explain again to the student until he or she understands and it takes time. For the lower level classes I usually combine languages, I will explain in English. When the student said that he or she doesn't understand, then I will explain in Bahasa Indonesia because the lower level students can't speak English very well yet, in Primary 4 itself if there are students who do not understand English, we will provide additional lessons outside the classroom, the teacher asks permission first to their parents to give additional hours of lessons to students who do not understand”.* (Personal communication, March, 3rd, 2023).

This is accordance with the observations I did in the class when the teachers teaching in the class, there were students who did not understand the teachers' explanation, but when teachers asked them to ask a question if they did not understand, these students did not ask because they did not understand English, so when the teachers paid attention to the students' assignment one by one, the teacher realized that there were students who did not understand the instructions that have been given, so the teachers must re-explain to the students by using Indonesian. To summarize, teachers should know each student's needs in teaching and learning, especially if it is used in English as the medium of instruction for young learners because every student has a different ability.

## **2. Discussion**

After analyzing the data by using thematic analysis, the researcher found that there were difficulties faced by teachers on the implementation of English as a medium of instruction for young learners as follow: (1) difficulty in teaching non English subjects by using English, (2) difficulty to select appropriate teaching methods, (3) difficulty to handle students with lack of focus, (4) difficulty to handle students with lack of English proficiency. Therefore, the discussion of those points will be explained below to see more information about them.

Firstly, teachers had difficulty teaching non-English subjects using English as a medium of instruction. One of the teachers has an English background, but she has to teach thematic integrated. Even though the teacher is good in explaining using English, she must master the material to be taught also (Nor & Kadariyah, 2022). Another teacher did not have an English background and faced difficulty. It was due to the teacher's choosing a Mathematics major, which was a slightly different language from English, and the teacher was required to teach English as a medium of instruction in Mathematics lessons. Therefore, the teacher did not have basic English knowledge before. Ana (2018) found that one of the main problems in using English as the language of instruction in Indonesia is that teachers do not have sufficient language proficiency and competence to teach English. Teachers with poor English proficiency will have difficulty expressing themselves in it, which can lead to negative perceptions of students about the teacher (Macaro et al., 2018) . The teacher can also develop the potential by learning more from any source about language. Teachers need to get mastery of the language content of subjects in English when they do not have the basic skills to teach English by conducting guidance in teaching (Saeed, 2015). In summary, low

proficiency skills that occur in teachers will greatly affect the course of the teaching and learning process in using English, but it can also be overcome by doing various ways of language learning.

Secondly, Teachers have difficulty selecting appropriate teaching methods. The teachers felt it difficult to choose the right method according to the student's needs. Sometimes, the students get bored when teachers use the same method. Fatiloro (2015) said that numerous language teaching methods can be implemented. In handling English teaching problems, teachers must use various methods for teaching the English language. It is related to the finding found in this research that teachers always want to try new teaching methods to eliminate boredom and allow more variation. Applying various methods, particularly in matching the method and teaching topic, will help teachers establish an effective teaching process (Sepyanda, 2017). In addition, applying appropriate teaching methods and techniques is tough because the teachers do not merely think of how to transfer four language skills but also how to maintain students' motivation and enthusiasm in learning and practising English.

Thirdly, teachers had difficulty handling students with a lack of focus. Students who can not pay attention have difficulties following the teacher's instructions and quickly lose interest in the lesson (Cicekci & Sadik, 2019). This is probably because of the teacher's centeredness, so if the teacher keeps talking, the students will feel bored and unfocused. Thus, the students will look for other activities, such as: disturbing their classmates or making noise. A low level of readiness in the students, learning difficulties, being in adolescence, having a lack of interest in the lesson, aimlessness and no motivation, as well as coming to school without sleep, hungry and tired make it difficult for them to collect their attention in the classroom (Macaro et al., 2019). It is related to the finding that there are students who are tired because school hours here are quite long, and when teachers notice that their students are not focused, they will start inviting their students to play games so that they will be focused on the lesson again. Thus, teachers should consider evidence that the student's attention is distracted as a clue to change the learning process.

The last, Teachers had difficulty handling students with a lack of English proficiency. Students' low proficiency and failure in the classrooms were because of their low proficiency in English (Vu & Burns, 2014). Teachers have difficulties teaching their students because most problems are connected to the student's lack of proficiency in English (Başibek et al., 2014). This problem in the teaching and learning process becomes a difficulty the teacher faces because they need to think about how the students with low proficiency catch up with

the lesson. The materials and tasks may be difficult for students to work with, which can lead to a loss of interest and focus in learning English (Oktaviani & Fauzan, 2017). It is related to the finding found in this research that teachers face difficulty when explaining and giving tasks to students who do not understand English. When students do not understand the lessons, the teachers will reexplain in Bahasa, which takes more time. That is why teachers will ask permission from their parents to give additional hours of lessons. Thus, teachers need to adapt their teaching style and materials accordingly.

#### **D. Conclusion and Suggestion**

According to the research, the researcher found four difficulties that teachers faced, such as: (1) difficulty teaching non-English subjects by using English; the teachers have to teach subjects which are not their major, so they found it difficult because they have to study first before teaching the class. (2) difficult to select appropriate teaching methods; the teachers felt difficult to choose the right method according to the student's needs because the students got bored when teachers kept on using the same method. (3) difficult to handle students with a lack of focus; the teachers find it difficult to attract students' attention because students are busy with their own things, such as: disturbing their classmates or making noise. The last (4) difficult to handle is students with a lack of English proficiency; this problem became a difficulty faced by the teacher because they need to think about how the students with low proficiency catch up with the lesson.

Based on the results of this study, some suggestions are important to pay attention to the difficulties faced by the teachers of English as the medium of instruction for young learners.

##### **1. For teachers**

The first is for the teachers who teach English as the medium of instruction for young learners. Teachers need to know the characteristics and needs of students in order to influence each competency. With this knowledge, the teacher can also add their quality of teaching performance. Every young learner cannot be equated, therefore the teacher must use various ways so that each student can follow the lesson well, especially students who have poor English skills.

##### **2. For school**

The second is for schools that implement English as the medium of instruction for young learners. When applying English as a medium of instruction, there are many things to consider. For example, choosing teachers who master English in certain subjects, or if it has already happened, the school is also expected to provide additional English lessons or training to the teacher as a provision to teach in English. This can support the success of EMI in schools that implement it.

### **3. For the future researchers**

The last is suggested to the future researcher who will conduct a study related to the difficulties faced by English as the medium of instruction for young learners in teachers' view. Future researchers should provide a clear explanation and gather new information about other teachers' difficulties with using English as a medium of instruction. Hopefully, this study can be a reference for further research that is interested in discussing in more detail teachers' difficulties with the implementation of English as the medium of instruction for young learners.

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