CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the study's background and explains why the researcher conducted this study. Five main sections in this chapter, namely the context of the study, statement of research problems, objectives of the research, significance of the research, scope and limitation of the research, and definition of key terms.

A. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Language is communication utilized by people to share thoughts, feelings, perspectives, and contemplations with other people. Numerous languages are spoken all through the world, where every nation has a national language and regional language with additional languages such as FL (foreign language)s that go about as second languages or FL (foreign language) used in that country. English is one of the languages used to communicate globally with a role as an international language and the development of various fields such as politics, economics, education, and tourism fields. (Nurhayati & Fitriana, Effectiveness of Summarizing in Teaching Reading Comprehension for EFL Students, 2018)

The most popularly spoken language in the world is English, which is a universal language that has been caused by the development of English due to the number of people who speak English in this world. English speaker estimates that in 2000 there were around 1.500 million English speakers

globally, consisting of around 329 million as their first language, 430 million as their second language, and about 750 million English speakers as an FL (foreign language). (Crystal, 2003)

English's role in Indonesia is an FL (foreign language) since the use and the study of English are by non-native speakers in countries where English is not the first language. Indonesia is a multilingual country with one national language (Bahasa Indonesia) that all Indonesians use as a medium of communication or lingua franca (Nurhayati, Djatmika, Sentosa, & Wiratno, 2016). The Language Development Agency (*Badan Bahasa*), Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kemendikbud*) of Indonesia declares data that currently 718 local languages spread all over Indonesia over 700 local languages with a national language called Bahasa Indonesia. From the view of cultural background, English has some differences from Bahasa Indonesia in many terms such as pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar.

Even though English's role in Indonesia is an FL (foreign language), where it is not used regularly, it is evident not all of Indonesian students are familiar with the English language. (Nurhayati, Basic Need Analysis in Practical English Grammar: An Effort on Creating and Empowering Autonomy Learners, 2020). English has been taught to Indonesian students from Elementary School to Senior High School as an important subject. The implementation of English as one of the subjects that the students should have proficiency in began with the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia No. 0487/1992 chapter VIII, which states that the

Elementary School can add subjects to the curriculum, as long as the subject does not conflict with the purpose of National Education. Followed by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia's policy No. 060/U/1993 about a probability to enact English as a base local content subject starting from the 4th grade of Elementary School.

Then in 2006, the new policy set in the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia stated that learning English in Elementary School is directed to develop the students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills so that the students can talk and communicate using the English language at the performance literacy level. In 2014, the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia regarding guidelines development of local content were replaced with the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia No. 79/2014 concerning the local content in the 2013 curriculum. This policy is not specifically for Elementary School but also Junior High School and Senior High School. It is clearly stated that one of the local subjects is language, even though it is not specifically mentioned. The changes in those policies above indicate that the government has an effort to develop and determine English as an FL (foreign language) to be taught at every education level in Indonesia. Those efforts from the government to make the students in Indonesia know and understand how to communicate using the English language since they were young are expected to give Indonesian students support in their future to live along with the huge society with speaking English ability to help them reach their dream in the

future in this globalization era, which English is a language that uses in almost of every part of life.

English is taught to young learners for specific reasons, all of which highlight the significance of an early start in FL (foreign language) learning. The first reason relates to the fact that for different historical, political, and economic reasons English has emerged as a major language for communication. On other hand, the young people who begin studying English formally in school as an FL (foreign language) believe that the young learners easier to achieve better competency in learning a new language. (Rich, 2014) Another research states the optimal age to introduce an FL (foreign language) to young people is when they are under ten years old. Ghasemi and Hashemi state that the optimum time to learn a language is when children are in elementary school because studying a new language with a first language in the first decade of life allows the young learners to independently understand as a native. (Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011)

Students in their first year of formal education, or between the ages of five or six to evelen or twelve, are reffered to as young learners. (Phillips, YOUNG LEARNERS, 1993) David Nunan's book entitled Teaching English to Young Learners defines the term `young learners` to cover a large chronological age span: from around 3 years old of age to 15. (Nunan, 2011) Young learners also refers to the students who are enrolled in their first seven or six years of formal education and are taking a foreign or second language. (McKay, Assessing Young Language Learners, 2006) Basically in Indonesia,

the age range between 5 to 12 years old includes elementary school students that are divided into 6 grades (first grade to sixth grade). Most Indonesian elementary school students not only speak Bahasa Indonesia as the national language but also a regional language as their first language. When English is introduced to elementary school students, there are several structural differences between the students' mother tongue and the English language, including differences in pronunciation, spelling, grammar, etcetera (Jazeri & Nurhayati, 2019). As a result, learning English which is an FL (foreign language) in Indonesia, poses significant challenges for young learners, including they are unable to pronounce words correctly and do not comprehend their meanings, making English one of the subjects that the students find difficulties. (Nurhayati, Improving Students' English Pronunciation Ability through Go Fish Game and Maze Game, 2015)

Learning difficulty is a condition experienced by learners that interfere with their efforts to achieve learning objectives. (Sriyanti, 2011) This condition leads to the fact that the learners fail or at least fail to achieve the learning objective. Sriyanti also classifies learning difficulties into four types; judging by the types of difficulties (severe learning disabilities, moderate learning disabilities, and mild learning disabilities); judging from the subject examined (difficulties in learning some subjects and difficulty in learning all subjects); depending on the type of difficulty (permanent learning difficulties and temporary learning difficulties); regarding casual factors (learning difficulties

due to intelligence factors and learning disabilities due to non-intelligence factors). (Sriyanti, 2011)

The circumstance in which there are obstacles to reaching learning outcomes during the learning process is the alternative definition of leaning difficulties. (Nurjan, Psikologi Belajar, 2015) Nurjan additionally classifies the reasons for the obstacles that cause learning difficulties into four factors, specifically internal factors, external factors, learning approach factors, and school factors. Internal factors come from students, namely psychological conditions relating to students' souls and desires which include intelligence, interests, attention, talent, motives, and maturity. The method in which parents educate their children, how parents are understood, and family relationship are examples of external factors that originate from outside of students. The educational approach factor includes strategies and methods utilized by students to hold out learning activities for learning materials. Curriculum, teaching strategies, and teachers are all considered school-related factors. In addition to the four elements mentioned above, the society environment also has impact on students' learning difficulties. (Nurjan, Psikologi Belajar, 2015)

The learning difficulties examined in this study is going to focus on English lesson because, in society, English is known as one of the most difficult subjects that have been taught in school. Even though English has been introduced from the first grade of elementary school, the differences between English and Bahasa Indonesia as the student's mother tongue make the students in Elementary School who are new to learning English found difficulties.

According to the research entitled Analysis of English Learning Difficulty of Students in Elementary School, as mentioned before the difficulties in learning English caused by various factors and grouped become two, namely internal and external factors. Factors that come from within students (internal factors) include; intellectual abilities, interest, talent, self-motivation, and maturity. While factors that come from outside the students (external factors) include factors related to the learning process which includes parental education, family relation, approach to learning, school environment (curriculum, teaching method, and teacher), and learning instruments or facilities in the form of hardware and software as well as the environment, both social and natural environments. (AR, 2015)

In the other previous research entitled Analysis of English Learning Difficulty of Students in Elementary School, one of the problems in learning English is the students' opinion that English is a difficult and boring subject so that the students do not like English subject and the impact is the low learning achievement. (Sintadewi, Artini, & Febryan, 2020) The students might not like English because of the different terms of language between English and Bahasa Indonesia or their local languages as mentioned before.

In this era due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the government has taken various measures to prevent the spread of the deadly COVID-19, such as closing public places including schools. For this reason, Indonesia's Minister of Education, Nadiem Makarim has also made a policy to change the learning system of schools that originally used the direct system to online learning from

home. Online learning means learning from a distance that takes benefits from technology such as laptops, smartphones, etcetera to support learning activities and becomes a new obstacle for the teachers and students. Some infrastructures that supported online learning could be accessed from electronic devices as mentioned before with internet connections such as Google Classroom, WhatsApp, Zoom, Edmodo, etcetera. (Abidah, Hidayaayatullaaah, M, Fehabutar, & L, 2020)

During the pandemic era at SD Negeri II Geger where the researcher conducted this research, students and teachers had implemented online learning at the beginning of the pandemic according to the circular letter of the ministry of education and culture No. 15 of 2020 regarding guidelines for organizing learning from home during the spread of Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19). They were using applications in the form of WhatsApp groups to apply distance and online learning by collecting assignments every week or sending photos to teachers. The implementation of online learning feels difficult for students to get the most out of their teacher's lessons, but the assignments are given as usual. The lack of understanding of the materials from the teacher because the teacher explains too fast and some teachers only gave ask without any explanation before as long as the unstable connection is the main problem of the implementation of online learning. (Yuzulia, 2021)

At the time this research was conducted, SD Negeri II Geger had used a limited face-to-face or limited direct learning system with strict regulations following the regulation from the District Youth Education and Sports

Department of Tulungagung Regency was published on March 4th, 2022. When this policy is implemented, one class is filled with half of the total number of students, allowing students to sit apart while learning. In its application, SD Negeri II Geger arranges the schedule in such a way that limited face-to-face learning is carried out following the regulations by making students' learning hours differ as well; classes begin at 8.00 a.m. and end at 11.00 a.m., with no breaks in between. English lessons are taught every two weeks and last one hour and thirty minutes. When seen through the learning program in use, this is not in conformity with what is done, as at least one material should receive two or three meetings. As a result, students face a variety of challenges as a result of their lack of familiarity with FL (foreign language), particularly English.

Because of those statements above, the researcher saw that previous research was carried out when implementing online learning in school but no studies focused on explaining the difficulties experienced by students when implementing face-to-face learning during the pandemic, therefore the researcher takes an interest to observe, investigate, and do research about the young learners' difficulties in learning English, especially during the pandemic to analyze the types of learning difficulties in learning English, the factors that affected the difficulties and to find the efforts to overcome the difficulties in learning English during the pandemic.

B. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

1. What are the difficulties faced by young learners in learning English during pandemic?

2. What are the factors affected English learning difficulties of young learners during pandemic?

3. How does the English teacher overcome the difficulties faced by young learners in learning English during pandemic?

C. OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

1. To understand the difficulties faced by young learners in learning English during pandemic

2. To understand the factors affected the young learners' difficulties in learning English during pandemic

3. To know how the English teacher overcomes the difficulties faced by young learners in learning English during pandemic.

D. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

1. For the English Teacher

This research is expected to give a contribution to the English teacher who found the difficulties of the young learners in learning English during the pandemic, some factors influence the young learners in learning English difficulties so that the researcher can solve the problem of teaching English

to the young learners so that the young learners be able to not find difficulties in learning English so that they can achieve the object of study.

2. For the Researcher

    This research is expected to give a positive contribution to developing the knowledge especially related to English education in Elementary School.

3. For the Other Researcher

    It is expected to give inspiration and reference to be developed for further studies by evaluating, revising, reconstructing, and modifying this research for other levels and objectives.

E. SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH

This study aims to analyse the English learning difficulties of young learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is carried out at SD Negeri II Geger which is located in Geger Village, Sendang District, Tulungagung Regency. To avoid the huger interpretation in this research, the researcher focused the research on the young learners in fifth grade and the controller from the English teacher. In the case of time, the researcher cannot decide how long the research is ended. It is based on the time the researcher gets the saturated data. If the saturated data has been acquired, the researcher ends the research.

F. **DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

Concerning to avoid misunderstanding, the researcher would like to give some definitions based on the title of this thesis "English Learning Difficulties Experienced by Young Learners at SD Negeri II Geger during COVID-19 Pandemic"

1. Young Learners

    The term 'young learners' refers to children who are between the ages of three and fifteen years old. (Nunan, 2011)

2. Learning Difficulties

    Learning difficulty refers to the condition when the students are not successful in achieving the standard criteria that have been set. (Parnawi, 2019)