

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Background of Study

In Indonesia, English as a foreign language occupies an important position in people's daily lives. Learning English has become a necessary skill. Being fluent in the language can open up a world of possibilities, whether for academic, social, or professional purposes. Therefore, many parents are now considering starting their children's English education at a young age. In the world of education in Indonesia, Schools with higher levels of education are now introducing English to students, even those in kindergarten. According to Sulisty (2009), English as a foreign language instruction has just recently started to spread throughout Indonesia's early childhood education system.

Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) is a way to introduce English to early children as their foreign language. Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) classify young learners into four age categories. The first group consists of preschool children aged 2-4 years, who are often still in kindergarten. Second, primary students aged 5-7 years old, then intermediate students aged 8-10 in formal elementary school, and finally early adolescent students aged 11-14 in formal junior high school. The Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 1 of 2021, kindergarten is an early childhood education unit in the formal education sector that is specifically for children aged 4 years to 6 years. So, it can be seen that kindergarten students are young learners.

The children in kindergarten ages, which can be categorized as the Preoperational stage by Piaget (1969), were in their "golden age" and this crucial time in life determines a child's quick growth of language and thought. Children at this age have good stimulus response skills, but their attention span is readily divided. Young children can also easily imitate the actions and words of others around them. Children can expand their vocabulary and talk like native speakers. Foreign language learning support for children is expected to gain optimum results from the correct speech, the number of vocabulary mastery, and the application of the right vocabulary.

Considering the importance of learning English in early childhood, many teachers and parents in Indonesia believe that learning a foreign language at an early is highly beneficial. Many parents have started taking their children to international schools. These Indonesian schools offer English as a daily language or private schools that provide English as a subject and many English programs in hopes of getting a better education than public schools. According to Brewster (2002), governments and private schools around the world have decided to introduce English into primary education, stating that it is an "act of faith" in which children learn the language better than older children due to a strong general belief that it is easier to understand.

In kindergarten, children begin learning English as a foreign language and Bahasa Indonesia as their first language. It is expected that children who learn languages will have long-term benefits. Kubanek-German (1998 in Brewster et al. 2002) discovered that middle school pupils who began studying English in elementary school had a modest edge in reading, writing, and listening, as an illustration of the long-term impacts of foreign language learning. Another example

from Brewster et al. is that in Italy, primary-age students who acquired a foreign language were more conscious of their L1 structures and developed greater 'language awareness' than other students who had not learned a foreign language (Brewster et al. 2002). Based on these examples, The researcher found that teaching English as a foreign language to kindergarten students will provide them with a long-term opportunity to learn the language, allowing them to grasp it better in higher school.

As happened in Bangun village, Gunung Malela, Simalungun, many parents prefer enrolling their children in private schools with subjects and are supported by English programs at school, especially for elementary schools. Because in the area, the public elementary schools no longer teach English lessons. The schools use the 2013 curriculum, where English becomes local content. At the same time, the local content in the area is the Simalungun language. It encourages local kindergarten educators to introduce and teach English so students are better prepared to continue learning English at the higher school levels. Also, the economic situation of the local community is middle to lower class, and many parents need help to send their children to private schools, preferring public schools. If the children are introduced to and equipped with English from kindergarten, it will be easier for them to learn English at the higher levels.

Teaching English to kindergarten children is different from teaching it to adults. Children learn language to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences concerning their family and friends, as well as to make sense of and organize their surroundings. Working with items or concepts encourages a youngster to become active learners and thinkers by building their knowledge. Language learning is a continuous process that begins at birth and continues throughout life because

language is the foundation of all communication. According to Government Regulation Number 17 Year 2010, "the orientation and introduction of science and technology at kindergarten is intended to prepare students for pre-reading, pre-writing, pre-arithmetic, responsive competence, and communication competence. All of these activities need to be done carefully, without pressure, and with enjoyment in order to make learning enjoyable for the kids and to ensure that they are prepared academically for elementary school."

In kindergarten, children celebrate individual and class achievement by listening, reading, and demonstrating experiences using texts such as drawings, stories, rhymes, symbols, dramas, and movies. A variety of elements influence the success of the teaching-learning process. In addition to offering English materials, English teachers must educate themselves on the physical, emotional, cognitive, and psychological aspects of children. The children love mimicking new sounds and intonation patterns because they are sensitive to the rhythms and sounds of foreign languages. In addition, younger students tend to be less inhibited and anxious than older students (Pinter, 2006).

By studying the characteristics of the children, English teachers who teach a foreign language can design appropriate materials for the children. It is believed that developing learning language strategies for children needs more than simply preparing a list of vocabulary and completing some tasks. English in kindergarten comes with its unique set of challenges. To encourage students to be good language learners, English teachers must not only improve their language skills but also raise their behavior.

Play should be an active component of the learning process, and kindergartens that provide an English course or extracurricular activities should give various opportunities for using and hearing the language. Teachers create programs that enable children to explore with tongues and share their ideas and knowledge with classmates and teachers meaningfully. In addition to creating an atmosphere that supports language development and literacy in some ways, teachers base their decisions about the materials they use and the focus of their instruction on their observations of the children's needs and learning expectations.

Based on the initial observations made by the researcher at Alkhairiyah Islamic Kindergarten Bangun, several problems were identified. First, the researcher found a mismatch between the school's syllabus and the English language materials taught by teachers. The syllabus has many topics, such as myself, part of my body, my environment, my needs, animals, and plants, while the teachers only teach two subjects, colors and numbers.

There was also a problem with learning activities. The teachers did not provide variations in the activities. The activities were not challenging enough for young learners. The teachers just put the numbers 1 to 10 with different colors on the board and ask the students to follow and say the English of the numbers they point to, and so do the colors, and it happens every day. Meanwhile, the characteristics of preschool students proposed by Slattery & Willis (2009) said that children have quite a short attention span, so they need a variety to avoid boredom.

Both of these are due to a lack of teaching materials. The researcher found that teachers lacked books or teaching material modules to use as a guide when teaching English at school. Meanwhile, materials play an important role in the

teaching and learning process. Materials are included in anything that can be used to facilitate the learning of a language, as stated by Tomlinson (1998).

Based on the facts above, the researcher tries to develop English materials for students of Alkhairiyah Islamic Kindergarten Bangun which are suited to the kindergarten syllabus.

#### **B. The Problem of Study**

Based on the background of the study above, the problem of the study is formulated as “ How are English materials for students of Alkhairiyah Islamic Kindergarten Bangun developed based on an eclectic approach ?”.

#### **C. The Objective of the Study**

Based on the problems of the study, this study aims to develop English materials for students of Alkhairiyah Islamic Kindergarten Bangun based on an eclectic approach.

#### **D. The Scope of Study**

This research is limited to developing English vocabulary materials appropriate for children based on the syllabus and curriculum that used at Alkhairiyah Islamic Kindergarten and eclectic approach.

#### **E. The Significances of Study**

The findings of this research are expected to be useful both theoretically and practically:

1. Theoretically

The result of the study can enrich and strengthen the knowledge of the literature on English teaching in reading and provide a beneficial reference for further research on developing English material for young learners.

2. Practically

- a. For Researcher

This research can at least add to the experience of developing English materials for children learners.

- b. For Teachers

The result of this research is expected to support teachers in the learning process, and the final product of this research can be used as teaching and learning materials.

- c. For Readers

This research will be useful as an experience in how to conduct further research on developing English teaching materials, regarding the development of English materials for young learners.