STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE ELIMINATION OF ENGLISH SUBJECT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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E-ISSN : 2615-3092  P-ISSN : 2615-3084

Abstract. This study aims to determine the perceptions of students and teachers on the elimination of English subjects at the elementary schools level. This research was conducted because there was still a pros and cons of the placement of English subjects in the 2013 curriculum should be taught at which level. The approach used in this study is descriptive qualitative. The research subjects with purposive sampling were eighth grade students and English teachers. The research on the study was collected through interviews. Research data were analysed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion /verification. The results of this research indicate that students find it difficult to learn English material at the next level. While from the teacher also did not agree that the English language subjects at the elementary school level were abolished because students did not have the basis and complicate students in understanding the material at the next level.

Keywords: Elimination, English Subject, Curriculum 2013, Perceptions.

http://sastra.unifa.ac.id/journal/index.php/jes/index

INTRODUCTION

Previously, English was a compulsory subject in Elementary Schools. But since the curriculum 2013 was implemented in 2016, English students' subjects were eliminated in elementary schools. Based on the argument from the Deputy Minister of Education and Culture Kasim (2012), said that English subjects were abolished for elementary students because they gave students time to strengthen their Indonesian language skills before learning a foreign language. This opinion is very contrary to the opinion of Ratminingsih (2019), which stated that the introduction of English in elementary schools aims to provide the foundation for children's acquisition of language from the beginning. The theory of language acquisition also proves that the earlier students are introduced to a foreign language (target language), the better their mastery of the language. In addition, the age of students belonging to children (6-12 years) is a golden age where their brains are able to absorb, quickly various linguistic knowledge that directs them to obtain the target language being studied. Therefore, the introduction of multilanguage at that age becomes a necessity.

The above idea is supported by the theory of Piaget (1952) concerning the problem of intellectual (cognitive) development at the age of 7-11 years (concrete operational) which one aspect that influences development is the aspect of language. This idea is supported by Hurlock (1993 as cited in Maisarah, 2018, p.1) “The ability of children to talk more at this age to develop concrete operational thinking concepts. The condition of children's brains is still flexible, so language absorption is easier, so when children aged 6-13 years in primary school, in areas of the brain that mastering language skills seem to have the fastest development”.

Based on the results of research Maili (2018) suggests that English teachers and principals in ten elementary schools in
Jakarta said that English needs to be taught in elementary schools because in early childhood language learning is easier to grasp, the digital age of all life systems uses English so that it makes it easier to accept technology, when children continue to intermediate levels it will be easier to accept English.

Another study from Arif (2015) concluded that the teacher's opinion during teacher certification training about the elimination of English as a compulsory subject in Elementary schools by collecting data through a questionnaire and concluded that the majority of teachers in the sample disagreed if English subjects were removed from the Elementary school level.

Based on the experience of researchers during elementary school years in 2005-2011 researcher still get English lessons but after the implementation of the curriculum 2013, the English subject was eliminated and this problem is still a pros and cons, a lot of news about the elimination of English subjects in elementary schools that appeared in various online media and other information media, so that students and teachers from SMP Negeri Katumbangan Lemo also needs to comment on the elimination of English subjects in elementary schools and the effect on English lessons in junior high schools. To achieve the target, the researcher asked a number of questions in the form of interviews.

On the basis of the piloting of the instrument, the researcher found that these students are less interested in learning English due to difficulties in translating conversational texts in Indonesian to English and learning hours have decreased since COVID-19 has plagued Indonesia, lack of vocabulary, access to learning English in courses and learning English in previous elementary schools can be a trigger for students who have less interest in learning English and these students do not agree to the elimination of English subjects in elementary schools because it is one of the ways or tools that allow us to communicate with many people from various countries and increase insight and knowledge and generations then there will be less in English if not taught early.

One of the teachers also thought that it is important to teach English in elementary schools because in the area where the teacher lives, English lessons have not been taught only sometimes as a local content lesson. The teacher also argues that the curriculum changes frequently which results in not achieving maximum learning but there are more curriculum changes. The teacher hopes that in the future the curriculum can adjust to the condition of the school area which is still lacking in learning facilities even though the existing curriculum is good but still needs to consider schools that are in areas far from the city especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic which further worsens the situation and the learning process.

METHOD

This qualitative research used descriptive analysis method. According to Sugiyono (2018, p.15), defined "Qualitative research methods are research methods based on the philosophy of post-positivism, used to discuss natural objects, (as opposed to experiments), looking for researchers as key instruments, sampling data sources conducted by purposive and snowball, triangulation (combined) settlement techniques, inductive/qualitative data analysis, and qualitative research results emphasize more meaning than generalization".

This research conducted at SMPN Katumbangan Lemo with its address at Lemo, Campalagian, Polewali Mandar Regency, Sulawesi Barat 91353. And it has been carried out on October 26-November 02, 2020. Moreover, the researcher used interview guidelines as an instrument.

In this research, the subject was the second-years students SMPN Katumbangan Lemo academic year 2020/2021 and two English teachers. Researcher used purposive sampling for
selected the subject.

RESULT

1. Student

Based on the findings of an interview, the researchers found that few students are interested in learning English. They tend to prefer other subjects such as Bahasa Indonesia, Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan and Pendidikan Agama Islam. This is due to the lack of motivation of students in learning English and the environment that does not apply English in their daily lives. Motivation is needed to increase student interest in the English learning process and the environment.

These findings are supported by Gardner and Lambert (1972 as cited in Rifai, 2010, p.5217) “motivation was seen to be divided into two very general orientations: integrative and instrumental. Instrumental motivation refers to a desire to learn a language because it would fulfill certain utilitarian goals, such as getting a job, passing an examination, etc. Integrative motivation refers to a desire to learn a language in order to communicate with people of another culture who speak it; the desire is also there to identify closely with the target language group.” So that, the environment and motivation greatly affect students in the language learning process.

Based on the findings, students have an opinion that English is important so that English is very important to be taught at the elementary school level, they find it difficult when they first learn English in junior high school, especially in writing and pronouncing English words. At an early age have a period where the ability to absorb children's language is very good so that learning English from an early age can improve children's abilities and it does not make it difficult to understand language at a later level. These findings are supported by Lenneberg (as cited in Maili & Hestiningsh, 2016, p.60), “the capacity to learn first language will be lost if it is not activated or trained during the critical period, which ranges from 2 to 13 years of age.” So that, during these times language can be learned more easily than at other stages of life. Jazuly (2016, p.39) also said that English needs to be applied from an early age because children will find it easier to develop English when children are teenagers, the material that has been taught will stick to their memory and it is difficult to forget it.

The findings of interviews with students, the COVID-19 pandemic which worsens the situation causes student learning time to decrease because there is no direct interaction between teachers and students so the learning process is in effective. These findings are supported by Aji (2020, p.396), saying that many students consider that school is a very fun activity, they can interact with each other, and schools can improve students' social skills and social class awareness and increase the ability of integrity, skills, and a sense of affection between students and teachers.

2. Teacher

Based on the findings of direct interviews with teachers who said that English is very much needed in the era of technology which uses a lot of English and students do not become stiff when learning English at the intermediate level. These findings are supported by Maili (2018, p.25) says that English is needed in the globalization era where all systems use English and if elementary school children are left behind in the eyes of English learners this can cause problems for children such as lack of trust, self exclusion, etc. If learning English from an early age will more easily accept English lessons at the next level.

Based on the findings of direct interviews with English teachers, the importance of English is taught from an early age so that the teacher does not agree that English at the elementary level is eliminated. These finding are supported by Rintaningrum (2015), saying that English does not need to be abolished at the elementary level because it will not affect the development of Indonesian on the grounds that English in Indonesia is a
foreign language so that the opportunity to use it in everyday life is very little, the learning process. Foreign language only occurs in formal class lessons so the learning process is different from learning the first language or mother tongue.

The curriculum that often changes is one of the impacts of the difficulties of teachers in the teaching and learning process. Based on the findings of interviews with teachers, teachers hope that in the future the curriculum will pay more attention to the suitability of teaching materials. These findings are supported by Yamin (2009 as cited in Sumaya, 2016, p.38) said that “The educational process will run conducive, interactive, and smooth if it is based on a good and correct curriculum basis. It can be said that the objectives of education can be fulfilled if the curriculum which is used as the basis of reference is relevant. In other words, the curriculum can lead to the achievement of educational goals.

Covid-19 pandemic which is a major problem at this time based on the findings in interviews with teachers said that teaching during the pandemic was very difficult with various limitations such as facilities and infrastructure, internet access etc. These findings are supported by Aji (2020, p.397-398) also stated that the infrastructure is not capable of being one of the problems because not all parts of Indonesia have current economic conditions, uneven internet network is also a problem. The problems mentioned are in accordance with the conditions that occur in the research area, where the school area is still in an area with minimal internet networks and the economic situation of each student is different, so there are still students who do not have communication tools to take part in online learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on two formulations of research problems in this research, namely: what are the students’ perceptions about elimination of English subject? And what are the teachers’ perceptions about elimination of English subject?

1. Junior high school students who do not get English lessons at elementary school level or are not introduced to English from an early age find it difficult to learn English material at the junior high school level and seem stiff, and the use of English in everyday life is rarely applied, so students do not agree if English at the Elementary school level is eliminated. The state of the area where the student lives and the economic status of the student is one of the problems in the learning process, especially in the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

2. From the teacher’s side do not agree if English at the elementary school level is eliminated because the impact is very visible at the next level. Many students do not understand the material taught in English lessons in the new academic year because of a lack of basic English learning. The area where students live that is far from urban areas is also one of the barriers for students to learn English because English learning courses are rarely found and of course the economic factors of students in these areas are different.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this research, some suggestions are given as follows:

1. For Students
Students must memorize a lot of English vocabulary, make good use of existing facilities such as existing smart phones used to learn English, increase the intention to learn English with friends or create study groups so that they can motivate each other in learning.

2. For the teachers
Improve skills in teaching English, especially for students of the new school year, so that an effective learning process is created. Opening a course place whose territory is rarely found where English
courses are.
3. For the future researcher
Researchers hope that this can be used as a reference for researchers researching similar matters in the future, even though this research still has many shortcomings.
4. For the Government
Researchers hope that the government can pay more attention to the needs of students and schools and consider the decisions made by seeing first hand the actual conditions in the field, especially schools in remote areas.

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