

Introducing English to Early Childhood (A Multi-Site Study in PAUD Terpadu Santa Maria and PAUD Terpadu Kristen Kanaan)



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ABSTRACT: This research aims to describe and analyze the strategies and the implementation of introducing English to early childhood. This research used a qualitative descriptive approach with multi-site design. The data collection was carried out through interview, observation and documentation. Data analysis was described in two stages, namely individual data analysis and cross-site data analysis. The results of the study show that: 1) the strategy for introducing English to early childhood is the implementation of curriculum in form of intracurricular or extracurricular; competent and trained English teachers; supporting infrastructure; involving parents and English language institutions; decorating classes with English ornaments; training English to teachers; parents help provide facilities for students and interact in English with their children; using teaching materials which packaged in an interesting and familiar way. 2) The introduction of English is planned by the English teacher, the homeroom teacher and the PAUD principal; taking into account the students' characteristics and school conditions in planning; English teacher involved homeroom teacher and assistant teachers in learning activity; the English teacher uses multidirectional interactions and nonverbal behavior; Evaluation consists of the student evaluation, teacher's reflection, and supervision of the PAUD principal. 3) Supporting and inhibiting factors of the introduction to English in early childhood include curriculum, number and quality of English teachers, school facilities and infrastructure, English-speaking environment at school and at home, attractively packaged teaching materials, and mother tongue.

KEYWORDS: Language Introduction, Introducing English, Early Childhood

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is education given to children from birth to the age of six. At this age, children have extraordinary sensitivity to their surroundings, so this period is called the golden age. The golden age only happens once in a human's life, so it is important for teachers and parents to provide meaningful stimulus for young children. The Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that early childhood education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to six years of age which is carried out through educational stimulation to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are ready to learn in order to step up into further education. This preparation is carried out by laying important foundations in several aspects of early childhood growth and development, which include aspects of religious and moral values, physical motor, cognitive, language, and social emotion.

The aspect of language development is an important aspect that needs to be developed from an early age with the aim of ensuring that children have good language and communication skills. Language is a communication tool in children's social interactions. Meanwhile, in learning, language is a tool for thinking. Therefore, providing language stimulus from an early age is very important to support children's social life and cognitive development.

In general, Indonesian people are speakers of three languages, namely vernacular, Indonesian and foreign languages. The first language a child knows is the language the child hears and learns in the family. Indonesian and vernacular are acquired by children from the environment where they live, so that one of the two languages is the first language or mother tongue for Indonesian children, while foreign languages are acquired by children through formal education at school.

Early childhood is in its golden age, so children are superior students who are sensitive to their surroundings. Naturally, children can absorb and imitate words in a foreign language, so they can master a foreign language in a relatively short time. In this digital era, children are easily exposed to English especially through videos. Hence, children learn English by listening to various people talking in English without regard to suitability and accuracy. English proficiency is needed in this digital era where

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the internet is used in every aspect of life, thus generating a new livelihood that demands quality human resources and the ability to communicate in various languages, especially English. Therefore, introducing proper English is important from an early age.

Young children are not good learners when it comes to learning linguistic structures and syntax, but introducing English from an early age can improve children's performance in learning these things in the future. Panfield's theory of brain mechanisms suggests that in the first years of a child's life, the child's brain forms "language units" which record everything he hears, so early childhood is the right phase to provide language stimulation other than the mother tongue (first language). At an early age, the child's brain receives stimulation well and is able to produce language units that are interconnected with other nerve cells that regulate motor activities, thinking and other intellectual functions.

Language development at the Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (henceforth PAUD) level depends on the social interactions that children have with the people around them. Children acquire language naturally through the things they hear, so introducing English to early childhood can work well without burdening the child if it is given naturally in the child's daily activities. English is introduced as a medium of communication in English introduction activities and in daily activities such as greetings, praying, and singing. Providing stimulus alone will not be able to produce productive results in introducing English, so there needs to be good interaction between teachers and students or students and students. Early childhood children need to be given the opportunity to use English in classroom interactions so that they can learn vocabulary and develop communication skills (Mattsson & Norrby, 2013). Murphy states that age is not a major factor in the successful introduction of English as a foreign language. The main factors for the success of introducing a foreign language lie in the environment, facilities and infrastructure, teachers, parental support, and so on (Murphy & Evangelau, 2016). Therefore, in introducing English to young children, a strategy is needed.

The introduction of English in formal educational institutions can be done through regulatory guidance and practical methods. Regulatory guidelines are guidelines or policies that come from the government or schools, as well as policies that focus on the learning development curriculum (Jazadi et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the practical method is a technique for introducing English carried out by schools. These techniques can include the use of English, techniques for procuring English teaching materials and media, as well as variations of English language introduction activities.

The implementation of the introduction of English cannot be separated from several factors, which are divided into two broad lines: factors that influence the learning system process and factors that influence the introduction of language aspects in early childhood. In the factors that influence the learning system process, there are several things that are closely related to the learning system process, which include the curriculum, teachers, infrastructure, and environment. Meanwhile, in terms of factors that influence the introduction of language aspects in early childhood, there are several things that can influence the introduction of English, namely the mother tongue, teaching materials, social interactions, learning media, and family background (Suriansyah & Purwanti, 2022).

Based on the results of the preliminary study, teachers and school policies have a role in determining how English is taught to students. The use of learning methods in early childhood has an important role in delivering English language material (Arumsari, Arifin, & Rusnalasari, 2017). The introduction of English can be carried out using communication strategies. There are two types of communication strategies used by teachers, namely modification devices and L1-based. Of these two strategies, the one most often used by teachers is the L1-based or language switching strategy (Wedananta, 2021). The research conducted by Purwanti (2018) found that a combination of picture-and-picture, talking sticks, flashcard media, as well as movement and song methods can improve children's ability to understand English.

Strategies for introducing English include methods, media, materials, and assessments. English learning strategies are demonstrated through the use of several methods, as follows: TPR (Total Physical Response) method: teaching English using songs, teaching English using games, and teaching English using stories; question and answer; and listening and repeating. Enjoyable English learning can be achieved through the use of the TPR (Total Physical Response Method), storytelling, pictures, and songs (Uzer, 2019). The media used in the English language introduction strategy include visual media and worksheets. The material used is the introduction of old vocabulary, which is repeated, and new vocabulary. The assessments used are observations, conversations, anecdotal notes, and students' work. In carrying out evaluation planning, teachers pay attention to the following things: determining the objectives of the assessment; identifying competencies; and arranging the framework. The supporting factor for learning English is the availability of learning media provided by institutions and teachers, while the inhibiting factor is the position of English, which is not the main language used by young children. During the evaluation process, the teacher observes the learning process and assesses the children's work as an evaluation (Toyyibah et al., 2020). Based on the description of the problem, this research aims to analyze and describe the strategies and the implementation of introducing English to early childhood.

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METHOD

This research used a qualitative descriptive approach with a multi-site design. A qualitative approach is used to describe phenomena and events in natural settings without any manipulation (Moloeng, 2013). Multisite study research is research that involves several sites and research subjects. The research subjects used are assumed to have the same characteristics to develop theories that can be transferred to broader situations and are more general in scope (Hamzah, 2020).

This research aims to reveal phenomena and facts in a comprehensive and complete manner regarding the introduction of English by describing the introduction of English to early childhood, which is carried out in two PAUD educational institutions, namely PAUD Terpadu Santa Maria and PAUD Terpadu Kristen Kanaan. These two sites were chosen as research locations because both PAUDs have classical English introduction programmes that are implemented according to the curriculum of each institution. Furthermore, students are relatively successful in mastering basic English, especially in religious and pronunciation contexts.

The data collection techniques used were observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher's presence is as an instrument and data collector. In carrying out research, researchers are directly involved in the field to obtain and collect the data. The data analysis technique used in this research is the Miles and Huberman data analysis model, which analyses the data interactively and continuously until the data is saturated (Creswell, 2016). The data analysis steps in this research are described in two stages, namely individual data analysis and cross-site data analysis. Individual data analysis is carried out through three activities that occur simultaneously, namely data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions or verification. Cross-site data analysis includes activities to formulate propositions based on the findings of the first site and the second site, combining theoretical findings from both research sites, and formulating theoretical conclusions based on cross-site analysis as the final findings from both research sites. Data validity testing was carried out using four techniques: extended observation, the researcher's research data, triangulation, and member check.

RESULTS

Based on the results of data analysis using individual cases and cross-cases with the Miles & Huberman model, the following findings are obtained:

Focus 1:

Strategies for introducing English to early childhood on both sites include: 1) The curriculum for introducing English can be prepared on the basis of the school's objectives, the needs of the students, and the requests of their parents or guardians. The introduction of English is carried out strategically in a classroom setting as extracurricular or intracurricular. 2) English-appointed teachers are teachers who have scientific qualifications in English and early childhood songs and have experience in teaching early childhood for more than three years. The English teacher received phonics training, and the other teachers also received English language training. 3) The infrastructure to support the introduction of English is classrooms, tables, chairs, speakers, laptops, LCD projectors, and books. 4) The school collaborates with the English language institution English First (EF) in building an English language environment. The school also involves parents and guardians of students by promoting an English introduction program. 5) English teachers habituate themselves as well as the students to pronounce English words properly and correctly. 6) Teaching materials for introducing English consist of thematic English taken from semester themes and the school's special programmes, such as phonics and *ayer*. 7) The pattern of interaction in the classroom is teacher-to-student, while social interaction in the classroom occurs through play activities and assignments, either individually, in pairs, or in groups. 8) The media used are flashcards, games, songs, audio, visuals, pictures, videos, movements or body language, letterland books, story books, activity books, English puzzles, and origami paper. 9) Most parents of the students facilitate their children with gadgets, internet connections, books, and interactions in English and send their students to take an English course.

Focus 2:

The implementation of the introduction of English to early childhood at both sites is as follows: 1) The planning is arranged at the beginning of the school year and every week. The learning plan is prepared by the English teacher and approved by the homeroom teacher and the PAUD principal. 2) Planning is made by considering the age, ability or language development, characteristics, needs, number of students, variety of games, and availability of infrastructure. 3) The aim of introducing English is so that students have proper and correct English pronunciation, have skills in phonics, are able to carry out simple conversations in English, and provide a stimulus so that children take a liking to English and are able to take part in English learning at a higher level of education. 4) The methods used are assignment methods, demonstrations, questions and answers, discussions, exercises, and storytelling. 5) Teaching materials come from activity books, phonics, and thematic books that are adapted to the child's development. 6) The introduction of English is carried out in the classroom, taking into account the number of students. The learning experience provided is in the form of individual assignments with play activities through motion, songs, and physical games, which include colouring, matching, writing, sticking, making lines, tracing, dot-to-dot, folding, and jumping. 7) In

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controlling the class and leading the game play, the English teacher is assisted by the homeroom teacher. The classroom atmosphere depends on the condition of the students, both students with special needs and students' interactions. 8) English language learning is teacher-centered. The teacher conveys information in front of the class and becomes a learning resource. 9) Teachers stimulate students' responses by using assignment methods, demonstrations, questions and answers, discussions, exercises, and storytelling. 10) Communication does not only occur between teachers and students but also between students and teachers and between children and other children. Specifically for playgroups, stimulus is given by getting used to listening to simple words and commands in English. 11) The teacher evaluates the learning activities that have been implemented and plans further learning based on the evaluation carried out. Evaluations of activities or reflections are reported to the PAUD principal. 12) Teachers assess students' development through the learning process, daily activities, and worksheets and activities. Teachers assess students' understanding of English through play activities and children's ability to understand teacher instructions. Teachers assess children's development in the categories of not yet developing, still developing, developing according to expectations, or developing very well. Meanwhile, in assessing children's English understanding, teachers assess based on three categories: earlier, middle, and later. 13) The PAUD principal carries out teacher supervision and evaluation once every semester. The PAUD principal also carries out weekly supervision through RPPs, which are submitted by teachers every week. 14) Planning for the next meeting is designed based on reflection or evaluation of the previous meeting.

Focus 3:

Supporting and inhibiting factors for the introduction of English in early childhood at both sites include: 1) The curriculum for introducing English is based on school objectives, the needs of students in the global era, and the requests of parents and guardians of students. 2) English teachers have an educational background in English, both in the fields of education and literature. Teachers have knowledge of English, phonetics, and a love for children. Insufficient manpower can hinder the implementation of the introduction of English. Meanwhile, a sufficient workforce equipped with English can support the implementation of the introduction of English. 3) English teachers utilise the classroom and all available infrastructure both inside and outside the classroom, such as LCDs and projectors, speakers, story books, Letterland books, activity books, and play equipment. 4) The school involves parents in supporting the continuity and synergy of the English language introduction program. The school also builds collaboration with English language institutions outside the school to hold speaking classes and hold English language events and competitions. The school builds an English-speaking environment by decorating the classrooms with English and other English-related ornaments and improving the English skills of other teachers. 5) The students' mother tongue influences the students' active use of English, how to translate words, and the language and structure of English sentences. 6) Teaching materials are packaged attractively in the form of stories, which can increase children's interest in learning English and help them remember the information provided. On the other hand, repeated use of learning activities can kill children's interest in learning English. 7) Social interaction in the classroom in the form of individual, pair, and group interactions in games can help teachers attract children's attention and provide changes to students' English pronunciation. 8) Children's English skills can be improved by maximising the delivery of material in class through songs, videos, pictures, games, and body language, as well as using activity books. Through activity books, teachers can convey their students' development to their parents. 9) Family background in providing learning facilities in the home environment has an influence on students' mastery and vocabulary of English.

Based on the research results, it was found that the strategy for introducing English was structured based on supporting and inhibiting factors of the introduction of English in early childhood, which include: curriculum, English teachers, infrastructure, environment, mother tongue, teaching materials, social interaction, learning media, and family background. Meanwhile, the implementation of the introduction of English can be divided into three stages, namely the stage before teaching the introduction of English, the stage of teaching the introduction of English, and the stage after teaching the introduction of English. The cross-site research findings are depicted in Figure 1.

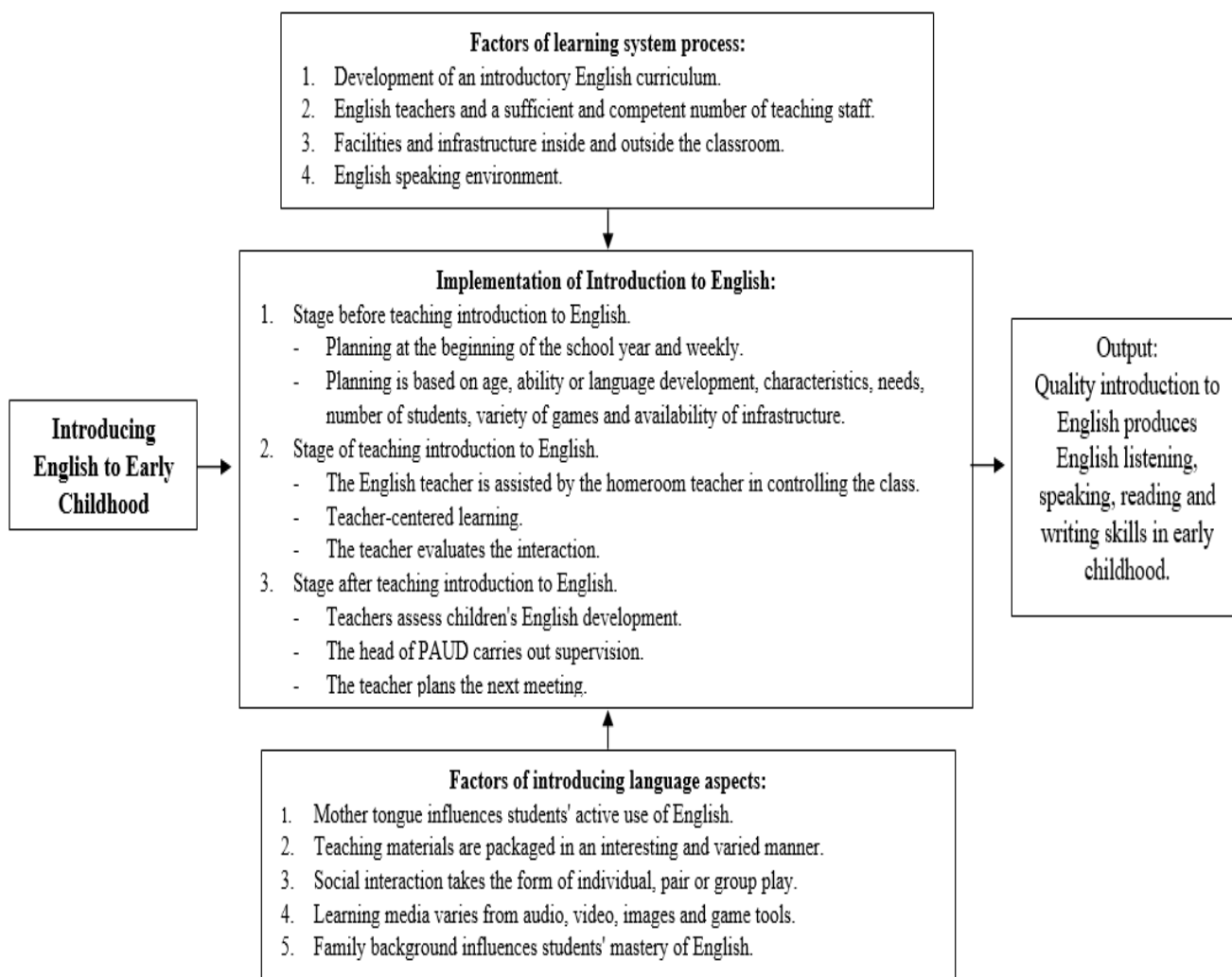


Figure 1. A Cross-Site Framework for Introduction to English in Early Childhood

DISCUSSION

A. Strategies for Introducing English to Early Childhood

A strategy is an outline of the direction for action in an effort to achieve predetermined targets (Djamarah & Zain, 2014). In introducing English, strategies are needed to influence the teacher's success in achieving learning goals. Schools develop curricula with the principle of diversification in accordance with educational units, regional potential, and students. The introductory English curriculum is prepared with attention to increasing faith and piety, increasing students' potential, intelligence, and interests, the demands of the world of work, and the dynamics of global development. The English introduction curriculum can be implemented as an intracurricular or extracurricular activity according to the needs, interests, and potential of students, as well as school characteristics (Shilviana & Hamami, 2020).

Teachers who play a role in introducing English are teachers who have English language competence, such as graduates majoring in English education or English literature, have English language skills in listening, reading, and writing, and are experienced in teaching early childhood. In early childhood education, teachers have an important role in building a learning environment that can help develop children's English language skills. Teachers who are competent in English and have experience teaching early childhood can build an English-language environment with the aim of developing children's English-language skills.

Good and quality learning certainly requires sufficient, appropriate, and quality facilities and infrastructure (Suriansyah & Purwanti, 2022). Classrooms with complete infrastructure, including tables, chairs, cupboards, decorations, play equipment, and books, can create an English learning environment for young children at school. In addition, there are several supporting facilities for the teaching and learning process, such as projectors, laptops, and speakers. The availability of infrastructure has an influence on the variety of learning strategies that teachers can use in the classroom. Supporting facilities such as laptops, projectors, and speakers provide many options for teachers in designing classroom learning plans.

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The school environment, as a place where the introduction of English occurs, has a big influence on children's language development. Skinner, one of the figures in behaviourist theory, views language development as obtained through children's interactions in the environment (Djamarah, 2014). Lily and Suriansyah, in Suriansyah and Purwanti (2022), concluded that parental background and parenting styles have a significant influence on children's learning outcomes in PAUD. By utilising parents' backgrounds, schools involve parents in the introduction of English by socialising school programmes, and parental support is visible in school programmes and after school hours. Through parental support in creating an English language environment at home by providing facilities such as gadgets, internet connections, English reading books, communication in English, and sending students to English courses, parents strengthen the cultivation of English provided by teachers at school and enrich students' learning resources.

The family, as the environment in which children are raised, has a big influence on children's language development. English has a unique sound system with a number and types of sounds that are very different from the number of sounds in Indonesian or vernacular. This difference is why some English sounds may not appear in the child's mother tongue, so the child has difficulty pronouncing words in English (Manggopa & Haryono, 2022). The influence of the mother tongue in the introduction of English in early childhood can be overcome by getting used to and involving students in pronouncing English words well and correctly. Manggopa and Haryono (2022) stated that practice and drilling can develop the habit of pronouncing English sounds well. Through the important role of speech organs in sound pronunciation, teachers train the placement of students' sound organs in the correct sound position in English.

In classroom learning, it is important for teachers to plan learning activities that consist of learning materials, social interactions, and learning media. The learning plan prepared by the teacher is an important strategy for introducing English to young children. Teaching materials selected according to the child's age and interests can increase children's interest in learning English (Suriansyah & Purwanti, 2022). Apart from that, social interaction and fun learning media can foster children's interest in and love of English.

B. Implementation of Introducing English to Early Childhood

Before teaching, the teacher prepares a yearly, semester, or quarterly learning plan, lesson units, and teaching program. Planning was made through collaboration between English teachers, homeroom teachers, and the PAUD principal. The homeroom teacher has deeper intimacy with the students, so they know the child's development and characteristics. The PAUD principal, as the leader, has quite a big role in ratifying the plans prepared by the English teacher. The English teacher collects all the information needed to plan the introduction of English from both the homeroom teacher and the PAUD principal so that a plan is prepared that will provide support in implementing the introduction of English to achieve the specified goals.

The introduction of English will be well planned by taking into account age, language development, characteristics, students' needs, and school conditions, which include learning equipment, variety of games, number of students, and number of lesson hours. Based on the age, characteristics, and needs of students, teachers plan the learning objectives and teaching materials. Meanwhile, school conditions can give teachers an advantage in choosing learning experiences and grouping patterns. The combination of all aspects can help teachers determine appropriate methods to achieve learning goals.

The implementation of the introducing English plan by English teachers involves guardian teachers and assistant teachers to control the class. Class control is one of the most important things in the teaching and learning process, considering a conducive classroom atmosphere supports effective and efficient learning (Djamarah, 2014). Introductory English learning is carried out with the teacher as the information center. The teacher conveys the implementation of learning material, instructions, direction, and appreciation through a combination of verbal and nonverbal behavior. The educational interactions that occur between teachers and students have the aim of ensuring that students are actively and creatively involved in learning (Djamarah, 2014). The interactions that exist between teachers and students occur in learning activities with teaching materials as the medium. Students' activity can be seen based on the physical and mental activities carried out by children.

Evaluation is carried out after face-to-face activities with students have been completed. Through evaluation, PAUD teachers and principals can assess the effectiveness of the learning experience and teaching methods used in order to improve the quality of subsequent learning. Assessment of students' work is an activity that cannot be separated from the teacher's work after carrying out teaching and learning activities. Assessment of early childhood learning is carried out with the aim of providing feedback to teachers to develop conducive teaching and learning activities in accordance with the needs and interests of students, as well as providing material for consideration for teachers to guide students' development so that they develop optimally and provide information to parents regarding the growth and development of students (Supena, Jaya, & Paramita, 2018). The results of the assessment are then used to develop future learning plans with better quality and to report to the students' parents. Apart from assessing students, teachers reflect by assessing the teaching and learning process that has been implemented. According to Mulyasa, quoted by Aslamiah et al. (2022, pp. 11–12), a learning and learning evaluation system that emphasizes self-evaluation (self-assessment) can develop a conducive learning environment.

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C. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Introducing English to Early Childhood

The introduction of English to early childhood is carried out based on a curriculum that builds upon school goals, the needs of early childhood in the global era, and the requests of parents and guardians of students. Schools develop curricula with the principle of diversification in accordance with educational units, regional potential, and students. The school determines the implementation of the English introduction curriculum as an intracurricular or extracurricular activity in accordance with the needs, interests, and potential of the students, as well as the characteristics of the school.

Teachers have an important role in determining the success of the learning process, considering that teachers are the dominant factor in the educational process in schools (Suriansyah & Purwanti, 2022). The overall availability of teaching staff can influence the implementation of English introduction activities. The insufficient availability of assistant teachers in early childhood classes means homeroom teachers work by themselves to fulfil educational duties inside and outside the classroom. English teachers who have duties as homeroom teachers do not have enough time to prepare introductory English lessons.

Early childhood has the characteristic that they tend to learn through experience and interaction with people around them; thus, introducing English to early childhood must be carried out naturally so as not to burden the child. The introduction of natural English is formed by teachers through the school environment and the infrastructure. Good and quality learning certainly requires sufficient, appropriate, as well as quality facilities and infrastructure (Suriansyah & Purwanti, 2022).

Lily and Suriansyah, in Suriansyah and Purwanti (2022), concluded that parental background and parenting styles have a significant influence on children's learning outcomes in PAUD. By utilising parents' backgrounds, schools involve parents in the introduction of English by socialising school programmes, and parental support is visible in school programmes and after school hours. Through parental support in creating an English language environment at home by providing facilities such as gadgets, internet connections, English reading books, communication in English, and sending students to English courses, parents strengthen the cultivation of English provided by teachers at school and enrich students' learning resources.

The family environment in which children are raised has a big influence on children's language development. English has a unique sound system with a number and types of sounds that are very different from the number of sounds in Indonesian or vernacular. This difference is the reason why some English sounds may not appear in the child's mother tongue, so the child has difficulty pronouncing English words (Manggopa & Haryono, 2022).

Teaching materials are a learning resource for students. Students' interest in learning English will rise if teaching materials are chosen according to students' needs (Djamarah & Zain, 2014). In teaching and learning activities, teachers and students build interactions with the medium of teaching materials and are assisted by learning media. Interaction is said to be at its maximum if it occurs between the teacher and all students, between children and teachers, and between students and students (Djamarah & Zain, 2014). Social interaction activities that are provided intensively can encourage students' abilities and skills in English, while the media used in early childhood learning can significantly improve children's learning outcomes (Suriansyah & Purwanti, 2022). Therefore, the goal of introducing English will be achieved through teaching materials, media, and social interactions designed to take into account the needs and characteristics of young children.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Strategies for introducing English to early childhood at PAUD Terpadu Santa Maria and PAUD Terpadu Kristen Kanaan include: the curriculum is implemented in intracurricular or extracurricular activities; English teachers are competent teachers who have a bachelor's degree in English, have more than seven years of teaching experience, and have received training. The school's infrastructure includes classrooms, tables, chairs, speakers, laptops, LCD projectors, and books. Involving parents in supporting English language introduction programmes, collaborating with English language institutions outside the school to hold speaking classes, holding English language events and competitions, decorating classes with English ornaments, and improving the English skills of other teachers; Parents provide facilities to students and interact in English with children; Teaching materials packaged in the form of stories, songs, plays, dances, and daily prayers and getting children used to pronounce English words properly and correctly.
2. The implementation of the introduction of English to early childhood at PAUD Terpadu Santa Maria and PAUD Terpadu Kristen Kanaan is as follows: The planning for the introduction of English is prepared by the English teacher, homeroom teacher, and PAUD principle; The introduction of English is planned by taking into account the students' natural abilities and school conditions. The introduction of English is carried out by involving homeroom teachers and assistant teachers; English teachers build multi-directional interactions and use non-verbal behaviour in learning; English teachers assess students' development and understanding through the learning process, daily activities, and student worksheets; English teachers reflect on learning; and the PAUD principle carries out supervision per semester and per week.
3. Supporting and inhibiting factors for introducing English to early childhood at PAUD Terpadu Santa Maria and PAUD Terpadu Kristen Kanaan are: the curriculum is implemented in intracurricular and extracurricular activities; Competent English teachers who have knowledge of English and more than seven years of teaching experience and training; Insufficient

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availability of teaching staff The school's infrastructure includes classrooms, tables, chairs, speakers, laptops, LCD projectors, and books. Decorating classrooms and student lockers with English ornaments and collaborating with parents and English institutions; Facilities provided by parents to students as well as interactions in English; The diverse mother tongues of students from all over Indonesia Teaching materials that are interesting and suit the students' needs include thematic, prayer, and phonics. Learning media that suit the characteristics of students, namely songs, videos, books, and games; and social interaction with many directions from teacher to student, student to teacher, and student to student.

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