

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the key topics surrounding the study's background, research questions, research objectives, significance of the research, development assumptions and limitations, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Problem

English is one of today's most widely spoken and dominant languages. It impacts numerous areas such as education, trade, business, industry, etc. Mappiasse in Rahman (2021) state that English has become the most widely used language in the world today. Therefore, everyone should have the ability to use it as a communication medium. In other words, mastering English is crucially important as a communication tool. Undoubtedly, English plays a much bigger role in this world that many people cannot avoid and ignore. Mastering English can connect us in a global world, and can also help us in our personal and professional lives. Although learning English can be challenging and time-consuming, It can be useful and valuable to have the opportunity to learn English.

Regarding to the importance of English, it leads most of people to deeply learn and master it. Teaching English essentially is important to improve students' ability to communicate globally. That is why most parents have a high demand to teach their children English early. Early language learning is considered effective for achieving better proficiency because it broadens children's horizons and awakens their initial enthusiasm and curiosity about language (Pinter, 2017). This is because a child's age is a strategic period in mastering a foreign language. Children aged 7 to 12 years are classified as young learners (Hadiyanti & Yolanda, 2021). Lenneberg mentions that based on the theory of The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), childhood is a golden period of development, including if they learn a certain language, they will be able to master it very well (Yanthi, Novi, Winti Ananthia, 2014). Thus, they will learn English effectively. However, young learners are unique, they learn differently compared to adults. Therefore, it is recommended that elementary school teachers not only know the development of

students' language competence in general but must also consider students' backgrounds and needs.

Based on the new curriculum used in Indonesian elementary schools, the Merdeka Curriculum, also known as the Independent Curriculum, is the most recent curriculum released by the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in 2021 during the COVID-19 epidemic. (Febriansyah et al., n.d.). The independent curriculum emphasizes English as a subject taught in elementary schools which was not required in the previous curriculum. In the 2013 curriculum, English is not taught in elementary schools. Its implementation is handed over to each regional school, as an extracurricular. On the other hand, in the Merdeka curriculum era, English language lessons have re-emerged and are increasingly recommended to be taught at the elementary school level. This is driven by three main reasons. First, English is a necessity for all Indonesian children; second, alignment of the English curriculum; and third, equal distribution of learning quality (kemendikbud.go.id, 2023).

With the re-emergence of English in the independent curriculum era, educators need to study learning concepts so that the teaching and learning process can achieve learning objectives. By the concept of the Independent Curriculum, namely liberating students, the learning process must provide freedom and independence for students to process their learning process. The Independent Curriculum offers a fresh perspective on Indonesia's education world, especially English language learning. This curriculum allows students to freely explore material following their needs and interests, emphasizing their active participation in teaching and learning (Rintaningrum et al., 2023). Using the Independent Curriculum will make it easier for students to communicate both verbally and non-verbally in English. This is because an independent curriculum frees educators to create learning that suits students' environmental needs. In the independent curriculum, elementary school-level English learning activities are divided into three phase, namely Phase A, Phase B, and Phase C (kemdikbud.go.id, 2022). Each phase has depth and breadth of different material contexts. English learning for elementary school-age children in grades 1-2 (phase A) should focus on practicing verbal communication, that is, they have listening, speaking, and viewing skills.

For children in grades 3-4 (phase B) writing skills can be introduced. Meanwhile, for children entering phase C (grades 5-6) oral and written skills are taught simultaneously (*wirasena.unpkediri.ac.id., 2023*). It means in teaching English, the teachers should pay attention to the phases and their objectives. By paying attention to this, teachers can easily understand student characteristics as a reference in formulating learning strategies consisting of methods and techniques or in formulating and mapping appropriate teaching materials so that learning objectives can be achieved.

Dealing with teaching and learning, to achieve the objective, teachers are required to create varied learning models. So that, the material can be easily absorbed by students. Apart from that, when delivering material teachers should use learning media that can support the learning process to run well. Meanwhile, Media is an important component in supporting learning activities (*Oktavia et al., 2023*). Having learning media that can be used in the teaching and learning process can arouse student interest and motivation. Apart from that, the use of learning media has a psychological influence on students (*Kristin et al., 2021*).

There are six basic types of learning media, including; Print media, audio media, visual media, human movement, projection media, and artificial objects (miniatures) (*Magdalena et al., 2021*). Of the several types of media, the one that is effectively used to assist the teaching and learning process is print media in the form of textbooks. Textbooks contain teaching materials that have been prepared systematically and structured to help the learning process in class. The material prepared in textbooks must follow the competency standards and basic competencies contained in the curriculum so that student success indicators can be achieved optimally. As a result, the objective of learning can be achieved by the students through activities and materials.

Designing and preparing materials can be done in various ways and forms. Several aspects must be considered when designing materials such as; the material must be interesting and meet students' needs, the material must have clear linguistic aspects and grammatical structures, it must be authentic and able to increase students' knowledge, the material must provide sufficient assessment tasks and the material must be able to deal with certain humanitarian issues (*Saiful, 2020*).

Currently, the Eco-ELT concept is a hype trend in English teaching and learning due to some environmental issues such as climate change, air pollution, oceanic pollution, biodiversity loss, and so on. Eco-ELT is defined as the study of environmental issues and the practice of environmental teaching in ELT (Saiful, 2023). Eco-ELT aims to build students' environmental awareness to instill children's love of the environment and local wisdom values. In other words, Eco-ELT can be an approach to developing and designing appropriate English teaching materials in English Language Teaching (ELT).

This approach emphasizes incorporating ecological and environmental themes into English language teaching (ELT). The goal is to raise awareness among English language learners about environmental issues, sustainability, and the importance of ecological responsibility. In Eco-ELT, English language lessons are designed not only to improve language proficiency but also to foster an understanding of environmental issues and promote a sense of environmental stewardship. Teachers may integrate topics related to nature, conservation, climate change, and other ecological concerns into language learning activities, materials, and discussions. Saiful added that this could also provide benefits in improving various aspects of students' language development, such as linguistic aspects, intellectual growth, and social and emotional intelligence (Saiful, 2023). This means that teaching ecology in ELT is not only useful for improving students' linguistic aspects but also for developing students' English skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Dealing with Eco-ELT, teaching English is also integrated with technology. The development of technology influences the teaching and learning process. This can be used to develop the quality of education in each field of study. According to Nyoman (2023) teaching students using technology is efficient and effective. With technology teachers can use many tools to make students more interested in the material, teachers can combine pictures, illustrations, designs, and words to compose learning material. From this explanation it can be concluded that technology can help teachers develop material and become a learning medium so that learning activities are more effective, efficient, and interesting, thereby motivating students' learning process.

Regarding teaching materials, Eco-ELT, and media, Canva is one of the supporting media that can help develop learning media. Canva is an application that can help teachers design learning materials that are attractive and exciting for students. Using Canva is practical because the application can be downloaded for free on the Play Store. Apart from that, Canva also has several advantages for teachers, such as; being able to increase teacher creativity in designing learning media, save time, have complete features and a variety of interesting and practical designs because teachers do not have to use laptops to design, because it can be done using gadgets (Tanjung & Faiza, 2019) in (Usman et al., 2023).

Based on researchers' observations and experiences in January 2023 at SDN Glagahwangi 1 Sugihwaras Bojonegoro. It was found that the school has improper books and facilities in learning. As a result, the teacher only teaches students based on LKS (*Lembar Kerja Siswa*) in the daily learning process which is still in textual form and taught by teachers who do not have an English educational background. However, learning media has an important role because it can provide imagination, reasoning, and visualization of actual conditions and the material presented so that it can be implemented optimally in everyday life. This is of course inversely proportional to the main aim of the independent curriculum, namely to give teachers the freedom to explore and choose teaching facilities and media. Limited facilities in schools mean that teaching tends to be monotonous and only focuses on books provided by the government. Apart from that, there are no other supporting learning media that can help students master English language learning. Therefore, additional English learning textbooks are badly needed.

Apart from that, there are several ecological phenomena such as long dry, air pollution, oceanic pollution, and climate change that have a big impact on the students' environment. Therefore, there is a need for children to be more aware of the environment. It is necessary to instill the character of children who love the environment through teachers as "Green" agents who are pro for environmentally sustainable to foster the qualities of loving the environment in students. Based on these problems, there is still a lack of teaching materials that can help students learning process and several ecological phenomena. The researcher decided to

overcome these problems and develop Eco-ELT-based textbooks for young learners.

Previous research has developed English textbooks for elementary schools. In general, English textbooks are proven to have a good rating, good presentation, good language, and good graphics (Hasibin & Inayah, 2021) and the development of the material is appropriate because it relates to students' lives. In addition, the level of difficulty is appropriate to the student's level (Hakim, 2016). So, English textbook teaching materials function well as a complement to the English curriculum in the fourth grade of elementary school (Utami et al., 2022). Therefore, textbooks can help and make it easier for students to understand English in class (Sari et al., 2021).

From all previous studies, most of them developed English textbooks for young learners who can be called elementary school students. In the development process, researchers use the 4D (Four D) Model including; Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate to get maximum results. Apart from that, from the previous studies above (Utami et al., (2022), Hasibin & Inayah, (2021), Hakim, (2016), Sari et al., (2021)) None of them have used an Eco-ELT approach in developing their products. Therefore, the Eco-ELT approach in this research is something new that has never been used to develop products.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of these problems, the research questions of the problem of this study are:

1. How is the process of developing an Eco-ELT-based textbook for young learners for fourth-grade Elementary School students?
2. What is the appropriate Eco-ELT-based textbook for fourth-grade Elementary School students?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the research objectives of this study are:

1. To develop an Eco-ELT English textbook for fourth-grade Elementary School students.

2. To develop an appropriate Eco-ELT English textbook for fourth-grade Elementary School students

1.4 Significance of The Research

This research is expected to provide the following benefits:

1.4.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this research is expected to have benefits, especially in the field of education, and can prove the truth of the theory regarding the purpose of using the Eco-ELT approach in learning proposed by Saiful (2020), who states that Eco-ELT aims to develop the linguistic and intellectual aspects of language learners. English as well as developing social and emotional intelligence, as well as producing English teachers who have "green" morals and care about the environment who can raise students' awareness of the environment.

1.4.2 Practical Significance

a. Students

Students are expected to be more interested and more active in improving their mastery of English through the English language learning process using Eco-ELT-based textbooks. Apart from that, students are expected to get an interesting learning experience through Eco-ELT-based textbooks which are designed to be as interesting as possible and different from LKS because they use an Eco-ELT approach which can develop linguistic and intellectual aspects. growth, social and emotional intelligence, as well as cultivating students' characters who love the environment.

b. Teachers

Teachers can improve the quality of learning to be more innovative and interesting by using Eco-ELT-based textbooks as a medium for delivering English language learning. Apart from that, by presenting material in the Eco-ELT textbook, teachers become "green" moral agents in the classroom who can foster students' character who love the

environment by increasing students' awareness of always protecting the environment.

c. School

Schools can use Eco-ELT based textbooks as a medium to support learning so that they can improve the quality of learning and create school citizens who love the environment.

1.5 Development Assumptions and Limitations

1.5.1 Development Assumptions

The development research carried out has development assumptions as follows:

- a. The English textbook developed contains English language material to expand students' knowledge
- b. The English textbook developed can be a medium that can support English language learning for fourth-grade Elementary School students

1.5.2 Development Limitations

The development research carried out has development limitations as follows:

- a. The development of English textbooks was developed based on the Eco-ELT approach.
- b. This English textbook is intended for class IV Elementary School students.
- c. The product is a printed textbook containing English material for class IV Elementary School.
- d. This English book was created using Canva.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The researcher has four definitions of key terms that were used to clarify the meaning of terms. They are:

a. English for Young Learners (EYL)

English for Young Learners (EYL) is teaching English as a foreign language to young students aged 7 to 12 years who are pursuing formal education in elementary school.

b. Textbook

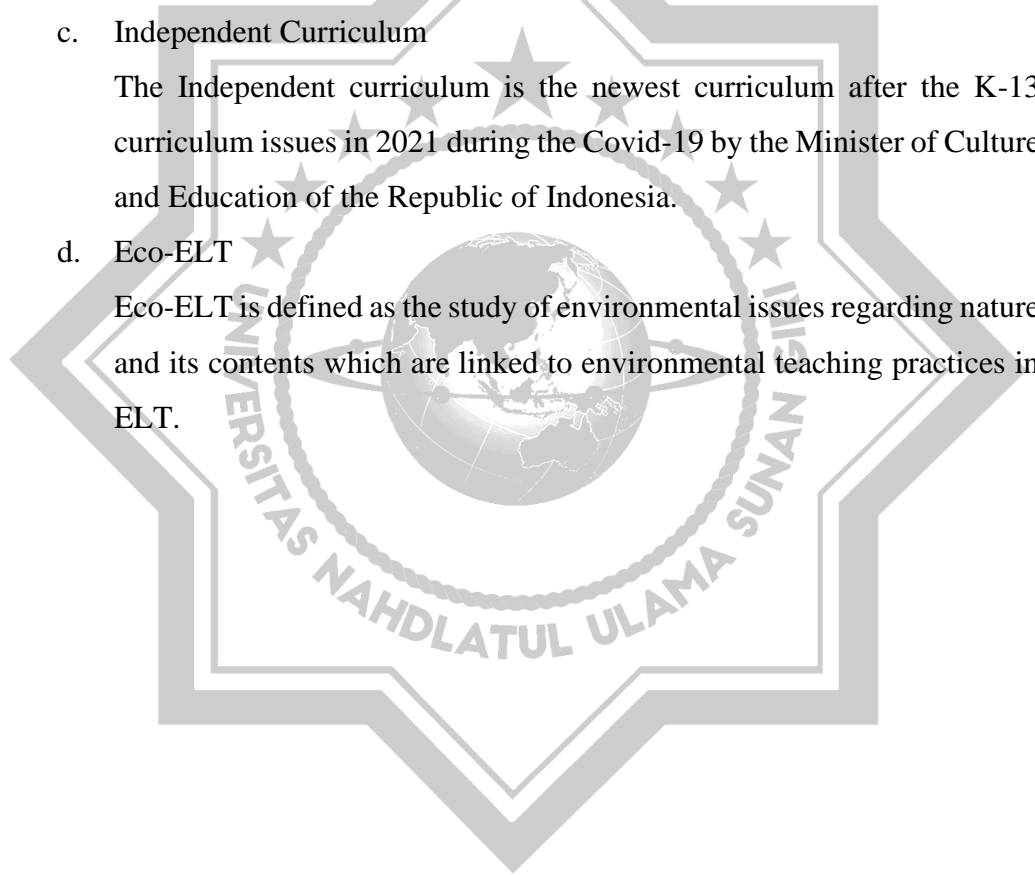
The textbook is a source or teaching materials that contains a collection of certain subject material which is arranged systematically and comprehensively based on certain objectives.

c. Independent Curriculum

The Independent curriculum is the newest curriculum after the K-13 curriculum issues in 2021 during the Covid-19 by the Minister of Culture and Education of the Republic of Indonesia.

d. Eco-ELT

Eco-ELT is defined as the study of environmental issues regarding nature and its contents which are linked to environmental teaching practices in ELT.



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