

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, research problems, purpose of the study, basic assumption, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study and definition of the key terms.

A. Background of the Study

Learning English as a foreign language is now an important pillar in the global education system, presenting both challenges and great opportunities for young learners, especially in non-native speaking countries such as Indonesia. Amidst the rapid flow of globalization that brings rapid changes in cross-country communication, English language skills from an early age are crucial capital for interacting in the international arena, accessing knowledge, and competing in the job market.¹ Given its urgency, English has been integrated as a compulsory subject in the elementary school curriculum in Indonesia, with the strong hope that students will have a solid language foundation.²

However, the achievements and levels of success in mastering English among young learners in Indonesia vary widely. This phenomenon cannot be seen singly but is the result of a complex interaction of various factors, ranging from the quality of teaching methodology in the classroom to a supportive or inhibiting learning environment.³ The combination of these

¹ Kurniati, D., Zaim, M., Jufrizal, & Jufri, M. (2021). Exploring Indonesian EFL Students' Perception toward English Learning at Primary Schools. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 10(1), 74–84. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v10i1.111762>

² Sahiruddin, & Manipuspika, Y. S. (2021). Teaching English in Indonesian Elementary Schools: Policy and Practice. *International Journal of Language Education*, 5(2), 178–190. <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v5i2.18051>

³ Salim, A., & Hanif, M. (2021). Exploring the Challenges of English Language Teaching in Indonesian Primary Schools. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 7(2), 125–136. <https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v7i2.5029>

factors creates a broad spectrum of achievement, from students who thrive to those who struggle significantly.⁴

In the context of second language (L2) acquisition, understanding what constitutes “successful learning” involves dimensions far richer than mere test scores or grammar mastery. According to Ellis (1995), successful learning is a dynamic process that is heavily influenced by complex interactions between learner factors (such as motivation, learning styles, and strategies), environmental factors (quality of language input and interaction opportunities), and the quality of instruction received.⁵

Complementing this perspective, various theories of language acquisition emphasize that successful learning also relies heavily on several essential factors, one of which is the presence of a low “affective filter,” where learning occurs efficiently when there are no environmental, social, or attitudinal barriers that affect the reception of new information (Conteh-Morgan, 2002). A non-threatening learning environment is crucial in creating these conditions, facilitating better input reception.⁶

Kimberly was chosen as the focus of the case study because she showed a learner profile that was very prominent compared to her peers in terms of English achievement. Kimberly, a fifth-grade student at SDI X, strikingly met this “successful learning” criterion. Her success was not only reflected in her high self-confidence (scale 9 out of 10) in speaking English but also in her many winning achievements in various English

⁴ Sahiruddin, & Manipuspika, Y. S. (2021). Teaching English in Indonesian Elementary Schools: Policy and Practice. *International Journal of Language Education*, 5(2), 178–190.

⁵ Rahayu, T. (2020). Motivation and English Learning Achievement among Young Learners in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 142–151. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i1.25016>

⁶ Subekti, N. B., Andriyanti, E., & Basikin, B. (2023). Indonesian EFL Students’ Speaking Anxiety and Its Correlates: A Mixed-Methods Study. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 10(2), 512–532. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i2.29227>

competitions at the national and regional levels.⁷

In addition, she was also active as part of the MC, or speaker, in various events at school, demonstrating extraordinary performative skills. Even more impressively, her speech often resembled a native speaker's accent, which contributed to her striking proficiency.⁸ Furthermore, she reported never feeling anxious in English learning situations because she considered it a passion, and her ease in understanding the subject matter at school indicated minimal affective filters and strong intrinsic motivation.⁹

Furthermore, the concept of successful learning in second language acquisition goes beyond mere grammatical accuracy, encompassing a broad dimension of communicative competence, including fluency, comprehensibility, and pragmatic appropriateness in various social contexts.¹⁰ Effective language acquisition also implies the learner's ability to adapt their language use according to the situation and the interlocutor, which is crucial for authentic interaction.¹¹

Therefore, success is not only measured by structural language mastery but also by the learner's capacity to effectively apply their language knowledge in real-world situations, construct meaning, and achieve communicative goals.¹² This

⁷ Toara, R. L., Mbato, C. L., & Ardi, P. (2024). The Role of Self-Confidence in Young EFL Learners' Performance: A Case from East Java. *Journal of English Education and Development*, 7(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.26486/jeed.v7i1.2345>

⁸ Subekti, N. B., Andriyanti, E., & Basikin, B. (2023). Indonesian EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety and Its Correlates: A Mixed-Methods Study. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 10(2), 512–532. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i2.29227>

⁹ Rahayu, T. (2020). Motivation and English Learning Achievement among Young Learners in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 142–151. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i1.25016>

¹⁰ Savignon, S. J. (2022). *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

¹¹ Toara, R. L., Mbato, C. L., & Ardi, P. (2024). The Role of Self-Confidence in Young EFL Learners' Performance: A Case from East Java. *Journal of English Education and Development*, 7(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.26486/jeed.v7i1.2345>

¹² Zhang, X., & Lu, X. (2023). *Pragmatic Competence in English as a Foreign Language: A Study*

means that a successful learner is able to negotiate meaning and reach a shared understanding, even with limited linguistic resources, demonstrating pragmatic adaptability and effectiveness.¹³

In addition, the success of foreign language learning is greatly influenced by individual factors of the learner, such as their learning style, learning strategies used, and also their language aptitude.¹⁴ Successful learners often demonstrate the use of metacognitive and cognitive learning strategies independently, allowing them to monitor and regulate their language acquisition process.¹⁵ The importance of diverse and rich language exposure (input), both in quantity and quality, is also an essential determinant, where authentic interactions and opportunities to produce meaningful output greatly accelerate the acquisition process.¹⁶ This phenomenon confirms that success is not only about what is taught but also about how an individual process and utilizes the learning opportunities available, both inside and outside the formal environment.¹⁷

Why are subjects with profiles like Kimberly's so important to study? Investigating cases of success like this has tremendous intrinsic and applicative value.¹⁸ In-depth analysis of

of Young Learners in China. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, 34, 25–41. <https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2023.34.02>

¹³ Subekti, N. B., Andriyanti, E., & Basikin, B. (2023). Indonesian EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety and Its Correlates: A Mixed-Methods Study. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 10(2), 512–532. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i2.29227>

¹⁴ Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2021). *How Languages are Learned* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ Toara, R. L., Mbato, C. L., & Ardi, P. (2024). The Role of Self-Confidence in Young EFL Learners' Performance: A Case from East Java. *Journal of English Education and Development*, 7(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.26486/jeed.v7i1.23>

¹⁶ Larsen-Freeman, D., & Cameron, L. (2018). *Complex Systems and Applied Linguistics* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

¹⁷ Rahayu, T. (2020). Motivation and English Learning Achievement among Young Learners in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 142–151. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i1.25016>

¹⁸ Sahiruddin, & Manipuspika, Y. S. (2021). Teaching English in Indonesian Elementary Schools: Policy and Practice. *International Journal of Language Education*, 5(2), 178–190.

demonstratively successful learners, especially at a young age, can reveal innovative and adaptive learning strategies, as well as specific driving factors (both personal and environmental) that significantly contribute to exceptional language proficiency.¹⁹ Such studies can provide a clearer “blueprint” for how effective and inspiring English language education can be realized, especially at the elementary school level. Kimberly is a clear example of where personal passion meets environmental support, creating an exemplary learner profile.²⁰

To further understand how such success can occur, previous studies have attempted to untangle this complexity, especially in identifying the driving factors of success in specific cases. For example, a case study by Li and Wang (2023) titled “Exploring Factors Contributing to High Achievement in Early EFL Learning: A Case Study of a Chinese Primary School Student” found that a combination of intensive language exposure outside the classroom and strong pedagogical support at school played a significant role.²¹

Similarly, Nguyen and Kim (2022), in their article "A Case Study on the Development of English Fluency in a Vietnamese Young Learner: The Role of Parental Involvement and Self-Regulation," highlighted how active parental involvement and students' self-regulation skills are key to success.²² Furthermore, Park and Lee (2021), in their study "The

<https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v5i2.18051>

¹⁹ Toara, R. L., Mbato, C. L., & Ardi, P. (2024). The Role of Self-Confidence in Young EFL Learners' Performance: A Case from East Java. *Journal of English Education and Development*, 7(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.26486/jeed.v7i1.2345>

²⁰ Subekti, N. B., Andriyanti, E., & Basikin, B. (2023). Indonesian EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety and Its Correlates: A Mixed-Methods Study. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 10(2), 512–532. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i2.29227>

²¹ Li, J., & Wang, W. (2023). Exploring factors contributing to high achievement in early EFL learning: A case study of a Chinese primary school student. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1165221. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1165221>

²² Nguyen, B., & Kim, J.-H. (2022). A case study on the development of English fluency in a

Impact of Affective Factors on English Language Proficiency: A Case Study of a Highly Motivated Korean Elementary School Student," showed that high motivation and a positive learning environment can foster extraordinary language proficiency.²³

Although the above studies have provided valuable insights, both general in nature about English language teaching and case studies from global contexts, there is still a significant gap in the literature. In-depth studies that specifically highlight and analyze individual cases of learners who are highly successful in English language acquisition at the elementary school level are still relatively rare, especially those that focus on specific contexts in Indonesia, such as Islamic schools in Kediri.²⁴

Kimberly's uniqueness lies in the fact that she started learning English at the age of 3 and has been active in the English Massive community since grade 2 of elementary school, in addition to her formal education at school. Details on how the combination of informal learning experiences and formal learning experiences interact to shape her phenomenal success have not been widely revealed. This gap indicates that our understanding of how a young learner can achieve above-average proficiency through the interaction of specific internal and external factors is still not comprehensively unraveled

Therefore, this case study is designed to focus attention on the experience of Kimberly, a fifth-grade student of an Islamic Elementary school in Kediri, namely SDI P2. Kimberly shows

Vietnamese young learner: The role of parental involvement and self-regulation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 42(3), 456–470. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.196450>

²³ Park, M.-J., & Lee, S.-H. (2021). The impact of affective factors on English language proficiency: A case study of a highly motivated Korean elementary school student. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(4), 53–70. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.1444a>

²⁴ Kurniati, D., Zaim, M., Jufrizal, & Jufri, M. (2021). Exploring Indonesian EFL Students' Perception toward English Learning at Primary Schools. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 10(1), 74–84. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v10i1.111762>

very prominent progress and mastery of English compared to her peers. This striking success makes Kimberly an ideal subject for in-depth analysis, offering a unique perspective on how foreign language skills can be optimally developed at an early age in the local context of Kediri, East Java. This is especially true considering the background of her teacher, Mr. WA, who is an electronics graduate but has experience in English courses, as well as the conventional methods that are partly applied in his class, which presents an interesting dynamic in the context of formal learning.

SDI P2, as one of the basic education institutions located in Pojok, Kediri, East Java, operates within the framework of the national Indonesian language that requires English. This unique local context is highly relevant to identifying how specific factors in the school environment, classroom interactions, and support from the local community can contribute to outstanding achievements in language learning. The classroom environment is large enough, clean, and cool with two fans and basic facilities such as a whiteboard, creating a supportive atmosphere for students.

The main purpose of this qualitative research is to present a rich and detailed narrative based on data collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation of Kimberly's learning activities about Kimberly's success journey. Specifically, this study will analyze in depth the complex interactions between Kimberly's personal characteristics such as her self-confidence and motivation to make videos and become a content creator, as well as her passion for English, the actual English teaching practices implemented at SDI P2, and external influences from the family and social environment. This analysis is expected to reveal the synergy between these factors in

facilitating successful language acquisition.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of study above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the factors that contribute to the success of an Indonesian young learner in English learning?

C. Research Objectives

In accordance to the following research questions, this research attempts to achieve the objectives of the study as follows:

1. To uncover the factors that contribute to the success of an Indonesian young learner in English learning.

D. Significance of The Study

1. Students

This study aims to provide students with a deeper understanding of the key factors that contribute to the success of young English learners. By exploring the real-life experience of a high-achieving learner, students are expected to gain valuable insights and hoped that this knowledge will not only inspire them but also help them reflect on and improve their own language learning journeys.

2. Teachers

This study is expected to offer valuable insights for English teachers, particularly those teaching at the elementary level. By examining the learning journey of a successful young learner, teachers can better understand and adopt more responsive and supportive teaching practices, recognize students' individual potentials, and create classroom conditions that foster motivation, confidence, and

communicative competence in English.

3. English Community

This study is conducted to know the factors contributing a successful young English learner. Considering her English skills through joining the English community. By reading this study, perhaps the English community could facilitate all of the students wider.

4. Future Researcher

For future researchers, there will be different conditions when this research has been done by the former researcher and recent researcher. Therefore, the strategy and motivation of the participant could be changed. It would be better if the future researcher could conduct a similar study in a better way.

E. Scope and Limitation of The Study

This study is a single-case qualitative research that focuses on the English learning experience of a female fifth-grade student at Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu (SDIT) Pojok 2, located on Jl. Rinjani, Lingkungan Klotok, Pojok, Kediri City. The participant, referred to as KBG, has demonstrated notable English competence through active involvement in activities such as serving as a master of ceremony and delivering English speeches. Additionally, she has achieved recognition by winning various English competitions at both regional and national levels. The scope of this study is limited to exploring the factors that contribute to KBG's success in learning English, based on the perspectives of the student herself, her English teacher, and her parents. The limitation of this study lies in its focus on a single participant from a specific educational, religious, and socio-

cultural context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader populations or different school settings.

F. Definition of Key Term

1. Young English Learner

Young English learners are kids or teenagers who are learning English as a second or additional language (EAL), frequently for future educational and professional opportunities or for communication in English-speaking communities.

2. Successful Learning

Successful learning is a complex process that involves several factors, including the learner's motivation, the learner's knowledge, engagement, and effective teaching strategies which is creating a lifelong love of learning and the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world problems.

3. Factors of Successful Learning

Successful learning is influenced by several interconnected factors, such as learner characteristics, learning processes, learning conditions, learning outcomes, and social context, and each of these aspects plays a crucial role in shaping the overall learning experience. These factors interact with one another for achieving meaningful outcomes increases significantly.

4. English Community

English clubs or community provide a casual environment for people to practice their English skills which is open to anyone and it has meetings regularly and attendees typically volunteer their time to participate by commit to speaking English during gatherings that supported by engaging activities designed to encourage and improve English language use.