

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is the way to communicate among people. Without language, people cannot communicate and tell something they want. In Indonesia, people mostly used Indonesian as their mother tongue. But nowadays people in Indonesia are aware that they also need to master English for their daily and future life.

In this globalization era, English as an international language is more widely used. Every international event uses English as the first language to communicate. In Indonesia itself, there are quite a lot of events and activities using English for children. In Indonesia, English has become a basic subject in every school. In the national exam in schools, English is one of the main subjects to be tested. Starting from kindergarten, students have already learned English. The society right now is trying to learn and master English for their future life.

The society believes that mastering English nowadays is very important and they realize that it must start early. Therefore, they bring their children to courses to learn English. Although it is only for an extracurricular subject, English is taught in many elementary schools in Indonesia right now.

McLaughlin(1978) says that children catch and learn language more easily than adults. Learning language is easier to be learned in the Elementary school age, because children will know the language from their environment. So if their environment uses English frequently to communicate, the children will also follow them. Learning English in Elementary school is good and important. Children in Elementary school will learn English from basic that makes them learn English more easily in the next step. Moreover, Purwo(2012) says that elementary school age is a golden time for children to learn English and perfect timing to learn.

It is found that not everybody agrees that English is taught at the primary level of education. Some people that I know and I ever ask them personally outside this study, do not think it should be taught that early. The reason is because they think that children in elementary school are still too young to learn English. They are afraid that children cannot understand the lesson because English is hard for children to learn. Besides, they worry if it will ruin the children's development of their mother language or Bahasa Indonesia

Things that trigger the writer to conduct this study is the controversy or the pro and the contra among the society on the practice of teaching English at Elementary School. By conducting a survey, the writer will find out what is the majority's opinion about this. The finding will be useful for the government to consider their policy in elementary education.

1.2 The Problem

This study is an attempt to find out the society's perception on English at Elementary education. Here is a basic question that needs to be answered:
What is the society's perception about English at elementary education?

1.3 The Objective

The objective of this study is to know the perception of the society about English at elementary school.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In this study the writer tries to find out how important children learning English in the elementary school. Is Lenneberg(1967)states that learning a second language, in this study is English, is very important for children in elementary age and elementary school is a good time for children to learn a lot about English. In learning English children's brains are more flexible than adults so children will learn English more easily. Moreover,Cook(1991) says that some teenager or adults who start to learn second language would fail to achieve language fluency, while children who were exposed to second language at their early age seem to be proficient like native speaker. It means that learning English in the early age is better and seems easier. Childhood is the superior period to acquire second language. Young learners will acquire language naturally and effectively in this period.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the study

The subjects of this study are the society both who have a child and who doesn't have a child in elementary school. This study is to identify the society's perception on English at elementary education. The investigator limits the subjects to the investigator's friends in the church and the investigator's friends from Senior High School, some friends from the investigator's parents who mostly have a child in Elementary school and also some neighbors who live near the investigator's home.

1.6 Definitions of Key-terms

To avoid misunderstanding, here are some definitions of the basic concepts in this study.

- **Society** is any group of people who have lived and worked together long enough to get themselves organized and to think of themselves as a social unit with well defined limits. This is based on the definition from Linton (1936).
- **Perception** is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment. This is based on the definition from Robbins (1983).
- **Elementary school** is an educational institution that organizes a 6 years education program for children aged 6-12 years old (Suharjo, 2006)