

(Review Article)

The Urgency of English Learning in Elementary Schools to Prepare Students for Global Competence: A Literature Study

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Abstract: Globalization and technological developments require students to have global competencies, one of which is English language skills. This study aims to examine the urgency of English learning in elementary schools (SD) in preparing students' global competencies through a literature review. The method used is a qualitative research approach with a literature study sourced from scientific journals, academic books, and relevant educational documents from 2020–2025. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques through data reduction, grouping themes, and synthesis of findings. The results of the study indicate that elementary school age is the optimal phase for language acquisition, so that early English learning can improve students' communication skills, digital literacy, and cultural openness. Communicative and contextual learning has been proven effective in increasing student motivation and self-confidence. Despite challenges such as limited teacher competence and students' fear of speaking English, English learning in elementary schools remains a crucial investment in preparing a generation ready to face global demands.

Keywords: Elementary School; English Learning; Global Competence; Globalization; Literature Study.

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1. Introduction

English is considered a global language or world language due to its widespread distribution and use for communication purposes in various countries, whether as a primary language, a second language, or a foreign language (Budiman et al., 2025). Learning English from an early age provides children with a strong foundation for communicating, learning, and developing in an increasingly globally connected world. Therefore, preparing children to speak English is crucial for parents for their children's future. Given the importance of mastering English skills from an early age to compete effectively in an increasingly modern and connected world, teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia is now a primary focus, particularly in primary education (Harahap & Harahap, 2024).

Globalization and advances in information technology have influenced the way humans communicate and learn on an increasingly broad and borderless scale. This transformation requires students to possess competencies that are not only local but also global, such as cross-cultural communication skills, digital literacy, and mastery of

international languages. In this context, English functions as a global lingua franca, enabling individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to interact effectively. English plays a crucial role in accessing global knowledge, technology, and information (Luckyardi et al., 2024).

The object of this article is the urgency of English language learning in elementary schools as a foundation for developing students' global competencies. Several previous studies have shown that mastery of English from an early age contributes to the development of communicative skills and global sociocultural understanding (Mohammed et al., 2024). In Indonesia, English language learning at the elementary school level has been incorporated into various curriculum policies, although its implementation remains controversial regarding the timing of introduction and learning approaches (Saragih, 2025). Empirical research also shows positive results. A study by Umar et al. (2023) found that communication practice-based English learning in elementary schools improved students' basic speaking skills and self-confidence. Furthermore, students were able to understand and use simple vocabulary in everyday communication. These findings strengthen the argument that learning English at the elementary school level has practical benefits in building global communication readiness.

Theoretically, elementary school-aged children are at an optimal stage of language development. They have a high capacity for absorbing new sounds and vocabulary, making them more receptive to foreign languages than at a later age (Zuhra et al., 2024). Early introduction to English can also foster a positive attitude toward foreign languages and increase motivation to learn at subsequent levels. Furthermore, in certain environmental contexts, such as tourist destinations or areas with international interaction, English language skills become a real necessity as a life skill (Na'imah, 2022).

Although various studies have discussed the benefits of learning English in elementary school, most of these studies are partial and focus on specific aspects, such as teaching methods, teacher perceptions, or limited student learning outcomes. Few studies have comprehensively synthesized the relationship between learning English in elementary school and the development of global competencies within a single, integrated conceptual framework. Thus, there is a research gap in the literature that systematically examines the urgency of learning English in elementary school from a global competency perspective.

To address this gap, this study employs a literature review approach by analyzing various scientific journals, academic books, and recent educational documents. This approach allows for the integration of empirical findings and relevant theories to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the contribution of English language learning to the development of global competencies in elementary school students (Setiawati, 2024).

This article makes several contributions. First, it presents a synthesis of the latest literature on English language learning for young learners in the context of globalization. Second, it integrates perspectives on language acquisition, pedagogical practices, and the concept of global competency into a single, integrated analysis. Third, it provides practical implications for the development of English language learning policies and strategies in elementary schools. Bagian kedua membahas tinjauan literatur yang meliputi teori pemerolehan bahasa dan konsep kompetensi global. Bagian ketiga menjelaskan metode penelitian. Bagian keempat menyajikan hasil dan pembahasan. Bagian kelima memuat perbandingan temuan dengan penelitian terdahulu. Terakhir, bagian keenam menyajikan kesimpulan dan rekomendasi. The second section discusses a literature review covering language acquisition theories and the concept of global competence. The third section explains the research methods. The fourth section presents the results and discussion. The fifth section compares the findings with previous research. Finally, the sixth section presents conclusions and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

This section presents the theoretical foundations and research findings relevant to English language learning in elementary schools. The review is structured thematically to connect concepts of language acquisition, foreign language learning strategies for young learners, and their relevance in the context of developing students' global competencies.

Language Acquisition and Development of Elementary School-Aged Children

Pemerolehan Language acquisition during elementary school is a complex developmental process involving phonological, lexical, and pragmatic abilities. Research in Payaman Village indicates that internal factors such as articulation limitations and external factors such as a lack of verbal stimulation in the family environment influence the language acquisition process in children around 8 years of age. These findings also documented the phenomenon of substitution, omission, and replacement of sounds during pronunciation, which are part of the dynamics of children's language development during elementary school (Ningrum et al., 2025).

In general, the literature on language acquisition emphasizes that children's language skills continue to develop through social interactions and formal and informal stimulation from their environment, including school and home. Understanding how children acquire and use language can inform more effective English teaching strategies at the elementary level (Syahbani et al., 2026).

English as a Tool for Global Competence

English is widely recognized as an international language, acting as a *lingua franca*, enabling cross-cultural communication and access to global knowledge sources. This concept can be seen in socialization studies that emphasize the importance of communicating in English as an indicator of individual competence in facing globalization and competition in the workplace. Socialization activities involving simulations and hands-on practice have been shown to increase participants' motivation and enthusiasm to continue learning and applying English in their daily lives (Defhany et al., 2025). Furthermore, English language competence impacts not only linguistic skills but also productivity and communication skills in professional environments and multicultural collaborations. Studies in the context of productivity show that the ability to communicate in a foreign language, particularly English, positively contributes to work effectiveness, individual productivity, and the ability to interact in international communities (Ariansyah & Caesar, 2024).

3. Methode

This research is a literature study, thus emphasizing data or writing as material related to the theme raised (Komang et al., 2024). This study uses a literature review method with a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the urgency of English learning in elementary schools in building students' global competencies. The research data consists of secondary data obtained from national and international journal articles, academic books, and educational policy documents published between 2020 and 2025. Literature searches were conducted through scientific databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, DOAJ, and national journal portals using keywords relevant to English learning in elementary schools and global competencies. The obtained literature was selected based on the criteria of topic relevance, source credibility (peer-reviewed), and suitability to the research focus (Dwijayanti et al., 2025). Data were analyzed using content analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, grouping findings based on themes, synthesizing research results, and drawing conclusions. To maintain the validity of the data, this study applies source triangulation by comparing various findings from different researchers to obtain a comprehensive and objective understanding.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on a literature review of various studies, English learning in elementary schools (SD) plays a significant role in shaping students' global competencies. Numerous studies indicate that elementary school age is a highly potential period for second language acquisition. Cameron (2020) states that elementary school-aged children are in a critical period in language acquisition, where they more easily absorb vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication patterns of a foreign language naturally. At this stage, children do not yet have significant psychological barriers, making them more confident in trying to use a new language.

Similarly, Pinter (2021) emphasizes that early foreign language learning can build a foundation of communication skills that persist into subsequent levels of education. Students introduced to English in elementary school tend to have better pronunciation and greater

communication confidence than those who learn at a later age. This suggests that English learning in elementary school serves as a long-term investment in language acquisition.

From a cognitive development perspective, Piaget's theory, as reinterpreted by Santrock (2020), explains that elementary school students are in the concrete operational stage. At this stage, children more easily grasp concepts through tangible objects, visuals, and direct experiences. Consequently, English learning will be more effective if linked to the context of students' daily lives, such as objects in the classroom, daily activities, or the surrounding environment. This contextual approach helps students connect language with real meaning, rather than simply memorizing it.

From a global competency perspective, Deardorff (2020) states that global competency includes the ability to communicate across cultures, an open attitude toward diversity, and the ability to understand global issues. English is the primary tool for achieving these competencies because it functions as the world's lingua franca. Mohammed et al. (2024) add that mastering English from elementary school helps students develop intercultural awareness and readiness to interact in multicultural environments. Thus, learning English not only develops linguistic skills but also global insight.

Luckyardi et al. (2024) emphasize the role of English in global digital literacy. Most digital learning resources, educational platforms, and scientific references use English. Therefore, students who have a foundation in English from an early age tend to be better prepared to access global knowledge. In today's digital age, this ability has become part of the much-needed 21st-century skills.

Empirical findings by Umar et al. (2023) provide concrete evidence that English learning in elementary schools positively impacts students' speaking skills and vocabulary mastery. Their mentoring program demonstrated that hands-on practice, games, and out-of-class learning methods can increase students' motivation and confidence in using English. Students who were initially passive became more active after learning was presented in a fun and communicative manner. This confirms that the communicative approach is highly suited to the characteristics of elementary school-aged children.

Furthermore, Wulandari and Sari (2022) found that the use of interactive media such as songs, videos, and language games can increase student active participation. These media help students retain vocabulary longer because they involve both visual and auditory aspects. This approach is considered joyful learning, which emphasizes a fun atmosphere to motivate children intrinsically.

However, the literature also reveals various challenges in implementing English learning in elementary schools. Lesia et al. (2022) found that limited teacher competency is a major obstacle, particularly in pronunciation and the application of communicative methods. Many elementary school teachers do not have an English education background, thus lacking confidence in teaching.

Irmawati & Wahyuni (2025) added that limited learning media and limited time allocation also impact learning effectiveness. In some schools, English is still considered an optional subject, thus not receiving adequate time. Umar et al. (2023) also identified that the main obstacles for students are limited vocabulary and a fear of making mistakes when speaking. This fear of making mistakes often hinders communication practice. Therefore, teachers need to create a supportive learning environment, where mistakes are seen as part of the learning process.

Overall, the results of the literature study indicate that the benefits of learning English in elementary schools far outweigh the challenges. With appropriate strategies such as a communicative approach, the use of interactive media, and teacher training, English learning can be optimally implemented. Learning English in elementary schools is not simply about introducing a foreign language but also preparing a generation capable of participating in a global society. English language proficiency opens access to international knowledge, expands educational opportunities, and increases competitiveness in the future. Therefore, strengthening English learning in elementary schools should be viewed as part of the national education strategy to prepare a global generation.

5. Conclusion

English language learning in elementary schools plays a crucial role in preparing students for global competency in the era of globalization. English, as an international language, opens access to science, technology, and cross-cultural communication. Elementary school is the optimal stage for language acquisition, enabling students to more easily absorb new vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication patterns. Therefore, early introduction to English provides a crucial foundation for language development at subsequent levels of education.

Beyond linguistic aspects, English learning in elementary schools also supports the development of 21st-century skills such as communication skills, digital literacy, self-confidence, and an open attitude toward other cultures. Learning delivered in a communicative, contextual, and enjoyable manner through games, visual media, and hands-on practice has been proven to increase student motivation and active participation. This demonstrates that learning methods appropriate to the characteristics of elementary school-aged children are crucial for successful English learning.

However, the implementation of English learning in elementary schools still faces challenges such as limited teacher competency and student self-confidence. Therefore, improving teacher quality, using a variety of methods, and creating a supportive learning environment are necessary. Overall, learning English in elementary school is a long-term educational investment that can equip students with life skills and readiness to face the demands of the global world.

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