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English for Young Learners: Identifying Students' Interest and Motivation in Learning English at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengidentifikasi minat belajar bahasa Inggris siswa madrasah ibtidaiyah di Kabupaten Bireuen, Aceh secara umum maupun minat terhadap setiap skill bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi motivasi belajar bahasa Inggris siswa. Di samping itu, untuk mengidentifikasi kendala yang dihadapi oleh siswa madrasah ibtidaiyah di Kabupaten Bireuen dan bagaimana peluang mereka dalam belajar bahasa Inggris juga merupakan tujuan dari penelitian ini. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan menggunakan observasi, wawancara, dokumen, dan angket untuk mengumpulkan data. Subjek dalam penelitian ini adalah 30 siswa madrasah ibtidaiyah yang tersebar di Kabupaten Bireuen. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa madrasah ibtidaiyah di Kabupaten Bireuen memiliki minat belajar bahasa Inggris yang sangat tinggi secara umum. Dalam setiap skill, minat siswa secara berurutan dari yang paling tinggi adalah mendengar (listening), berbicara (speaking), membaca (reading), dan menulis (writing). Sementara itu, siswa juga memiliki motivasi yang tinggi dalam belajar bahasa Inggris. Di sisi lain, hasil penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa meskipun siswa menghadapi kendala berupa keterbatasan buku ajar dan kesulitan menghafal kosa kata bahasa Inggris, mereka memiliki peluang yang sangat tinggi dalam mata pelajaran tersebut.

Kata Kunci: minat belajar, motivasi belajar, kendala belajar, peluang belajar.

Abstract

This research was conducted to identify the interest in learning English of madrasah ibtidaiyah students in Bireuen Regency, Aceh in general as well as interest in each English skill. In addition, this study also identified students' motivation to learn English. Besides, identifying the obstacles faced by madrasah ibtidaiyah students in Bireuen Regency and knowing how their opportunity was in learning English was also the aim of this study. This research was a qualitative descriptive research using observations, interviews, documents, and questionnaires to collect data. The subjects in this study were 30 students of madrasah ibtidaiyah spread across Bireuen Regency. The results of this study indicated that students of madrasah ibtidaiyah in Bireuen Regency had a very high interest in learning English in general. In each skill, students' interests the highest were listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Meanwhile, students also had high motivation in learning English. On the other hand, the results of this study also showed that although students faced obstacles in the form of limited textbooks and difficulty in memorizing English vocabulary, they had very high opportunities in these subjects.

Keywords: learning interest, learning motivation, learning obstacle, learning opportunity.

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INTRODUCTION

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In Indonesia, students begin to learn English in elementary schools or *madrasah ibtidaiyah*, although most elementary schools only apply it in high grades, namely grades 4, 5, and 6. This is in line with the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 060/U/1993 on February 25, that English subject in Indonesia is included in one of the local content subjects which are taught to students in grades 4 to 6 (Wijaya, 2015).

However, when the curriculum changed in Indonesia in 2013, many experts argued that children should be more focused on learning religious and cultural values as the basis for building their character so that foreign language learning is unnecessary at elementary school level. This triggered the abolition of English subjects in the primary school education curriculum in mid-2013 (Faridatuunnisa, 2020). However, in practice, elementary schools are allowed to apply English learning as a local content subject, considering the need for English language skills in dealing with world developments and the era of globalization.

From preliminary observations, the researcher found that from 58 *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen, only 14 *madrasah ibtidaiyah* teaches English. From this comparison, it is concluded that more schools do not fathom the significance of language learning at young age. However, Brumfit in Zulkifli (2014), says that the elementary level is the best time to learn English since this phase is supreme time learn language. Brewster, Girard, and Ellis in Zulkifli (2014) also mention that children have better ability to imitate what they hear and see from adults so that learning language at a basic level is more effective. Furthermore, in the theory of learning English, Cameron (2001a) claims that children are easier to learn language rather than teenagers or adults are. They tend to have the ability to demonstrate or use the foreign language by putting aside feelings of fear or reluctance of making mistakes in using the language. Children tend to have better ability to be like native speakers. Regarding English for Young Learners (EYL), Piaget, as written by Cameron (2001a) states that children are active learners and thinkers. They construct their knowledge according to the object of study or ideas they understand. Children ask questions, have great curiosity, even from the early stages children have goals about what they want to do.

In contrast to the theory, Vygotsky (1962) in Cameron (2001b) declares that although children could learn language actively, adults play essential roles in assisting children's language development. Adults help them to learn and develop ideas and thoughts to be expressed verbally. Vygotsky in the theory zone of proximal development (ZPD) says that the process of children's development will be greatly assisted by the presence of adults, in this case are their parents and teachers. Cameron (2001b) also said that Bruner (1976) mentions in children's development process, language is the most essential tool they require to help them in overcoming the problems. Therefore, one way to build children's language skills is through carrying out various activities which attract children's interest to support verbal abilities.

In addition, in the preliminary study, the researcher also found several potential obstacles encountered by students in learning English. This is influenced by the teacher's understanding of the interests and motivation of students' learning so that it affects teaching and learning process. Mahfud (2001) states that interest is a sense of concern that has an element of feeling which results in a person's being active in an activity. In other words, interest is the reason of the occurrence of an action. Furthermore, Fathurrohman & Sulistyorini (2012) state that interest is a feeling of pleasure that arises and persists in a person originating from the tendency of his soul towards a thing or action. In addition, Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger (2014) as quoted by Ricardo & Meilani (2017) say that interest in learning is a condition that shows a phenomenon that arises and is experienced by a person as a result of the interaction between the individual and the surrounding environment. Furthermore, Hidi & Renninger (2006) in Li Sha, Christian Schunn, Meghan Bathgate (2016) define interest in learning as one of the factors that influence the emergence of motivation in someone who has a desire to be involved in an active learning activities due to the presence of desire to have the knowledge.

According to Slameto (2013) in summary there are several things that indicate a high interest in learning: students show a tendency, so they continue to pay attention to the lesson intensely; there is a feeling of pleasure and loving for the subject matter; there is the emergence of a sense of pride and satisfaction in the things they

do; students show a preference for what they are interested in; and they show active participation and enthusiasm in learning activities.

Meanwhile, according to Tampubolon as quoted in Oktaviani (2018), motivation is a vital issue that causes interest to ascend when there is integration between desire and ability. Furthermore, Danar (2012) states that a child's high learning motivation can be identified from his perseverance in learning and not easily discouraged to achieve success despite being confronted by various obstacles. With the motivation, students' willingness to learn can be strengthened as motivation serves to encourage an effort to achieve the desired results (Sari et al., 2021). Furthermore, according to Gara et al. (2022) the environment also influences learning motivation, such as proper parenting process. Al-Harbi (2019) said that students' positive attitude toward the environment can help them to produce motivation. In line with this, Sardiman said as quoted in Nasrah (2020) that learning motivation can be detected from these several indicators, namely: being diligent in doing assignments, being tenacious, showing interest and independence, enjoying a variety of tasks and learning activities.

Class management in the form of teachers-students' interaction is important to create an ideal classroom (Julianda, 2019). This can be realized through the understanding among them. Teachers' understanding of students' interests and motivations in learning is crucial for achieving maximum learning processes and goals. As stated in the concept of educational psychology that in an effort to develop the educational process of students to optimal stage, understanding their interests and learning motivation is essential to recognize learning opportunities and overcome obstacles faced in the learning process. This is supported by Fitri et al. (2020) who state that teachers require to develop attractive learning models to maximize learning outcomes. Teachers also have to be able to provide appropriate learning atmosphere depend on what students require so that they can optimize the students' capabilities (Anggreani, 2022). Not only the teachers, the entire education practitioners in Indonesia also keep trying to improve the education quality in this country without ignoring the students' interest in achieving new knowledge (Idami, 2018). Nevertheless, the teachers are the main actors in the educational system. In teaching and learning process, teachers who teach and the students as the learners should focus on the process of activities to improve students' knowledge, attitude, and competency (Ananda, 2019).

Based on the enlightenment above, this study aims to identify the interests, motivations, obstacles, and opportunities of learning English of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* students in Bireuen. This is expected to contribute to the development of English language education at the elementary school level as well as to become a reference for policy makers to implement English language learning at the elementary level in order to take advantage of the golden age potential of students to learn English using appropriate methods and media.

To support this research, several studies had been conducted by other researchers. First, Kusmaryati & Amertaningrum (2017) administered a research entitled, "Exploring Students' Interest in Learning English". The location of this research was at several secondary schools in Kudus. In their research, researchers used a questionnaire as the instrument for collecting the data and it was found that students showed high interest in learning English. Second, a qualitative study had also been conducted by Fitriana Rahmawati (2018) in Samarinda. She identified that students in grade four of secondary school achieved a good level of learning interest and motivation. Students could respond actively both written and oral when teacher invited them in simple conversation. Third, Yuzulia (2012) also conducted a research entitled, "A Study on Students' Motivation toward Learning" by using a case study, located in a senior high school in Pekanbaru. It was found that students possessed high motivation to learn English, both in the form of extrinsic and intrinsic ones. Forth, a study entitled, "Students' Interest in Learning English of Eleventh Grade Students of SMA Negeri 1 Sukodadi" was conducted by Ainia. Ainia (2020) wrote that she administered an interview and gave the questionnaire in collecting the data and she found that students had low interest in learning English due to the monotonous English teaching method.

In line with the previous researches, this study is to identify the students' interest and motivation to learn English. However, to find the level of students' interest in all four English skills in details then make it dissimilar to the previous ones. Furthermore, in this research, identifying the obstacle and opportunity to learn English are others significances which are as assistances in understanding students' learning development. In addition, various data collecting techniques provided in this research considered sufficient to reach more specific and more accurate findings. These findings, hopefully, can give a contribution to the policy makers regarding the strategy of English subject implementation in secondary level of education.

METHOD

This research was carried out by using qualitative approach with descriptive design. Creswell (2014) states that the researcher is a key instrument in this approach, who makes efforts to explore and understand the sense of what come about various individuals or groups, originating both from social and humanitarian issues. Furthermore, the researcher went to 10 *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen which implement English subject. Then, the researcher brought up a set of representations obtained from field notes (observations), interviews, photography, recordings, and the results of questionnaires.

This research was conducted in 10 Islamic elementary schools in Bireuen namely: MIN 19 Bireuen, MIN 8 Bireuen, MIN 42 Bireuen, MIN 35 Bireuen, MIN 1 Bireuen, MIN 53 Bireuen, MIN 48 Bireuen, MIN 51 Bireuen, MIN 6 Bireuen, and MIS Abeuk Jaloh, Bireuen. It was conducted in March 2022.

The subjects in this study were students of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen, with the total of 3 students from each of 10 *madrasah ibtidaiyah* spread across this regency. In other words, there were 30 respondents. On the other hand, students' interest and motivation in learning English, as well as students' learning obstacles and opportunities were the objects of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Interest in Learning English at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen

From the results of observations, in general, researcher found that the process of learning English in *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen has been running as it should. In particular, the data related to students' interest in learning English can be described as follows.

First, the observation showed that students felt happy when the teacher started English lessons. They paid very good attention to the explanations. Next indicators showed that students raised hands excitedly when the teacher asked questions. They also discussed with their friends about the lesson and asked the teacher when the material has not been understood. Students tended to fall into good category regarding these indicators. However, some of them were seen whispering during the discussion but they were quite active in asking questions. Furthermore, it was also found that students were included in very good category when asked to come forward to solve the questions. Meanwhile, in answering the teacher's questions enthusiastically, the students were in the category of being quite interested.

To sum up, *madrasah ibtidaiyah* students in Bireuen is very interested in learning English. The results are strengthened by interviews. All respondents said that they liked learning English. Meanwhile, for discussion activities, one of the respondents from MIN 19, N, said that he sometimes had discussions with his friends. Meanwhile, all respondents also admitted that they were enthusiastic in doing assignments.

To strengthen the data, the researcher also gave questionnaires to students. First, it was identified that 15 students strongly agreed with the statement that they enjoy doing English assignments, while 12 students agreed. While 3 students were doubt, and no students strongly disagreed. 15 students strongly agreed that they always do their English assignments correctly, 11 students agreed, while 4 students were unsure, and no one disagreed or strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 2 students admitted that being late in submitting assignments was common for them, 1 student agreed, 5 students were unsure, 13 students disagreed, and 9 students strongly disagreed. 3

students said they only learn English when there is a test. 1 student agreed, 1 student was unsure, while 15 students disagreed and 10 students strongly disagreed with it. 13 students said they really enjoyed watching English films, 11 students agreed, 6 students were doubtful, and there were no student chose neither agree nor strongly agree. Regarding students' eager to answer teacher's questions, more than half of the participants strongly agreed that they were enthusiastic, 10 students agreed, 3 students were undecided, while only 1 felt unmotivated, and no student strongly disagreed with the statement.

So, after being analyzed using a Likert scale, it was found that the percentage of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* students in Bireuen who have an interest in learning English is **83.89%**. The percentage after being interpreted based on Riduan (2010) is in the **very high category** of interest.

The high interest of students of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen in learning English is in line with the theory proposed by Piaget. In Cameron (2001a), Piaget said that children have great curiosity and have goals about what they want to do. In learning foreign language, *madrasah ibtidaiyah* students have great curiosity about what they are learning. This condition can be used by adults, especially by teachers, to facilitate them with various teaching activities that will further support their curiosity. This is also supported by zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory proposed by Vygotsky that the children's development process is greatly assisted by the presence of adults.

1. Students' Interest in English Reading Skill

From the results of the questionnaire, we can identify how the students' interest in English is. For reading interest, 12 students really liked reading English discourse, 12 students liked it, while 6 students chose neutral. Then, 19 students really liked reading English story, 3 students liked it, and 8 students were neutral. In addition, 11 students really liked the activity of reading conversation in English, 13 students liked this activity, while 6 students were neutral. 7 students admitted that they really liked reading letters in English, 15 students liked it, 7 students chose neutral, while 1 student disliked it. Reading song lyrics in English, 15 students really liked it, 10 students liked it, and 5 students were neutral. Thus, it was concluded that the average percentage obtained that students really liked reading in English or it was 42.66%. It was included in the fairly high category. While 35.33% of students liked reading and it was included in the low category, 21.33% neutral was included in the low category, 0% of student who disliked reading was included in the very low category, and 0.7% of students who really disliked reading was included in the very low category.

In brief, students' English reading interest at *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen is **84%**. After the percentage is interpreted based on Riduan (2010), it is in the **very high category**.

2. Students' Interest in English Speaking Skill

Regarding saying letters and words in English, 19 students really liked it, 8 students liked it, and 3 students were neutral. Introducing themselves in English, 13 students really liked it, 14 students liked it, while 3 students were neutral. Furthermore, 10 students really liked talking to their friends in English, 10 students liked it, and 10 students were neutral. For the activity of mentioning numbers in English, 14 students really liked it, 12 students liked it, and 5 students were neutral. In addition, 12 students really liked singing in English, 12 students liked it, 4 students were neutral, while 1 student disliked it. In brief, there was 45.34% of students who really liked to speak English were included in the fairly high category, 37.34% of students who liked to speak English were included in the low category, 16.67% who did not like to speak English were included in the very low category, and 0% really disliked to speak English was included in the very low category.

After being analyzed using a Likert scale, it is identified that students' English speaking interest at *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen is **85.6%**. After the percentage is interpreted based on Riduan (2010), it is in the **very high category**.

3. Students' Interest in English Listening Skill

The questionnaire about students' interest in listening showed 13 students really liked listening to English stories. 13 students liked it, while 4 students chose neutral. Listening to teachers and friends speak English, 18 students liked it very much, 11 students liked it, and 1 student chose neutral. There were 12 students really liked the activity of listening to English songs, 14 students liked it, 3 students chose neutral, and 1 student really disliked it. Next, 11 students really liked watching English films, 6 students liked it, 11 students were neutral, and 2 students disliked and very disliked this activity. Furthermore, for listening to teachers or friends reading English discourse, 16 students really liked it, 12 students liked it, while 2 students were neutral. In brief, 46.67% of students really liked to listen to English and were included in the fairly high category, 37.34% who liked listening were included in the low category, 14% of students who said neutral were included in the very low category, 0.6% who disliked were included in the very low category, and 0% who strongly disliked was included in the very low category.

In line with the elaboration above, students' English listening interest at *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen is **85.73%**. After the percentage is interpreted based on Riduan (2010) it is in **very high category**.

4. Students' Interest in English Writing Skill

For writing activities, 13 students really liked writing English words and sentences. 16 students liked it, and 1 student chose neutral. Next, 13 students really liked writing about family, 11 students liked it, 5 students were neutral, and 1 student disliked it. Then, 5 students really liked writing English stories, 13 students liked it, while 12 students chose neutral. For writing numbers in English, 12 students really liked it, 13 students liked it, and 5 students chose neutral. Meanwhile, writing English song lyrics, 10 students really liked it, 5 students liked it, 14 students chose neutral, while 1 student disliked it. In brief, 35.15% of students really liked writing English and it was included in the low category, 38.67% of students who liked it was included in the low category, 24.67% who was neutral was included in the low category, and 1.33% who disliked was included in the very low category, and 0% of students who strongly disliked was included in the very low category.

In short, students' English writing interest at *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen is **81.6%**. After the percentage is interpreted based on Riduan (2010), it is in the **very high category**.

Based on the results above, it can be concluded that the students' interest in learning English at *madrasah ibtidaiyah* in Bireuen tend to be interested in listening, then followed by interest in speaking, interest in reading is in the third position, and in the last position is interest in writing.

Students' Motivation in Learning English at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Bireuen

Motivation is another crucial thing in the learning process as well as interest in learning. Interest in learning also affects learning motivation because both are on the same indicator. In addition to the feeling of pleasure and desire to learn which is an intrinsic motivation that has been described in the previous discussion points, motivation is also shown by the students who were in the good category in terms of feeling happy when getting praise. Some others showed enough category. This shows that extrinsic motivation in the form of a desire to get praise from the teacher is also owned by students. This is as stated by Ad from MIN 42 that she learned English because she wanted to get appreciation from his teachers and parents in the form of praise and gifts.

In addition, from the interview, it was found that the students studied English because they wanted to get good grades, as stated by N from MIN 19. Meanwhile, At from MIN 48 stated that his desire to get grades and praise from the teacher was his motivation to learn English.

To strengthen the data, the questionnaire identified that 19 students strongly agreed with the statement that they study English diligently in order to get good grades. 8 students agreed, 1 student was unsure, and 2 students disagreed. While, 11 students strongly agreed that they were motivated to learn English in order to get praise from teacher and friends. 7 students agreed, 3 students disagreed, and 6 students strongly disagreed. People who speak fluent English look cool, 15 people strongly agreed with the statement, 7 students agreed,

and 2 students were unsure, while 6 students disagreed. Furthermore, 5 students strongly agreed that they were motivated to learn English for a gift from teacher or parents. 8 students agreed with it, 4 students were unsure, while 10 students disagreed, 3 students strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 4 students strongly agreed with working on English assignments when they will be submitted. 3 students agreed, 1 student was unsure, while 12 students disagreed, and 10 students strongly disagreed. Related to other motivations, 18 students strongly agreed that they were encouraged by their parents to learn English. 8 students agreed, 2 students were in doubt, while 2 students disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement.

So, after being analyzed by using a Likert scale, the percentage of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* students in Bireuen who have motivation in learning English is **77.33%**. The percentage after being interpreted based on Riduan (2010) is in the **high category**.

The results of this study indicate that interest and motivation to learn are two inseparable things. Students who have a high interest in learning also show that they have high motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic. This is in line with what was stated in the theory by Fauziah et al. (2017) that the high learning motivation of students will also affect their high interest in learning.

Students' Obstacles in Learning English at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Bireuen

The observations showed that most of the students seemed quiet and being not disturbed by the noise outside the classroom. In addition, the students liked the various media used by the teacher as admitted by N at MIN 19, he said that sometimes they learn through games and playing songs. He showed that they liked the teacher's varied way of teaching. However, related to this, the researcher obtained information from interviews with several respondents that teachers tend to ask students to write, but the students dealt with it.

The observations also showed that some students used textbook by sharing with their seatmates since the textbooks were only distributed at school during lessons. As expressed by Sy from MIN 6, it can only be used at school without being allowed to take them home and she learned English vocabulary through a dictionary at home.

Furthermore, based on the results of interviews, most of the respondents admitted to have difficulty in mastering English vocabulary. As stated by Fr from MIN 1, he sometimes gets bored because he did not understand the vocabulary. That point was also agreed by At from MIN 48. The same thing was conveyed by several other respondents. On the other hand, the respondents looked comfortable as the classroom looks neat and fans and air ventilation is sufficient.

In addition, the results of the questionnaire can be used to strengthen the findings. In the statement about boredom reading English material, nor students strongly agreed or agreed, 6 students felt doubtful, 17 students disagreed, and 7 students strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 5 students strongly agreed with the teacher teaches English monotonously, 1 student agreed, 10 students were undecided, and 14 students disagreed, and no students strongly disagreed. The next statement showed that 3 students strongly agreed that they disliked the teaching methods, 1 student agreed, 6 students felt doubtful, 11 students disagreed, and 9 students strongly disagreed. Regarding the availability of English textbooks, no students strongly agreed that they did not have English textbooks, but 6 students agreed, 4 students were unsure, 16 students disagreed, and 4 students strongly disagreed. Another obstacle was difficult to memorize vocabulary. 1 student strongly agreed, 10 students agreed, 8 students were unsure, 9 students disagreed, and 2 students strongly disagreed.

So, after being analyzed using a Likert scale, the percentage of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* students in Bireuen who experience problems in learning English is **51.22%**. The percentage after being interpreted based on Riduan (2010) is in the **fairly high category**.

From the results of the study, it was found that the biggest obstacle faced by students in learning English is their ability to master vocabulary. This according to Westwood as quoted by Hasibuan et al. (2013) is one of the internal factors related to self-confidence in the abilities and efforts given. Meanwhile, constraints from external factors that arise are obstacles in the form of inadequate learning tools and media, in this case textbooks.

Students' Opportunity in Learning English

The results showed that the students have great opportunities in learning English. Learning opportunities are influenced by interest. So, when students' interest is high, the learning opportunities are also high.

In addition, the limitations of textbooks, on the other hand, creates opportunities for students to learn English from other sources. The respondents admitted that they had at least an English dictionary and storybook at home. These books create opportunities in learning process. Then the interview identified that students not only learn English at school, but they also learn English with other people, some even take additional English lessons. This is in accordance with what At from MIN 48 said that she studied English with her brother, and Fr and his friends from MIN 1 took additional classes after school.

In term of students learn from other sources besides textbooks, 16 students strongly agreed, 11 students agreed, 3 students felt doubtful, and nor students disagreed or strongly disagreed. Students also learn English with other people besides the teachers, 20 students strongly agreed with the statement, 3 students agreed, 4 students were doubt, and 3 students disagreed.

Thus, after being analyzed using a Likert scale, the probability of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* students in Bireuen in learning English is **87.67%**. The percentage after being interpreted based on Riduan (2010) is in the **very high category**.

The results of this study indicate that the learning opportunities of *madrasah ibtidaiyah* students in Bireuen is proportional to their interest. This is in line with Fauziah et al. (2017) that when student's interest in learning is high, the learning opportunities will also be high, as well as when interest in learning is moderate or low, then student's learning opportunities will also be adequate or low.

To compare with the previous researches' findings, the results of this research support the findings of Kusmaryati & Amertaningrum (2017), Yuzulia (2012), and Fitriana Rahmawati (2018) regarding students' high interest and motivation in learning English. On the other side, this shows different result with Ainia (2020)'s in term of interest category in learning English. Ainia found it low due to the displeasure of teaching method used by the teacher, nevertheless, this research found it high. Hence, as the implication, through the findings of this research, it is believed that these will contribute to the decision of English subject application in primary level of education considering the interest and motivation of the students toward the subject is affordable.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of English subjects at elementary school or *madrasah ibtidaiyah* becomes a choice between yes or no as the consideration is from the understanding of policy makers to the extent to which foreign language learning is important for children. This is related to students' interest and motivation in learning; the obstacles and opportunity are also crucial. Based on the results of the research, it is revealed that *madrasah ibtidaiyah* students in Bireuen have a very high interest in learning English. In details, it is showed that the interest in English listening skill of students is the highest (85.73%), followed by student' interest in speaking for 85.6% which also showed a very high interest, then 84% of students showed a very high interest in reading, and 81.6% of students showed a high interest in writing. Meanwhile, they also have high intrinsic motivation such as the desire to speak English and to have good grades, and extrinsic motivation such as having support from parents and teachers. Meanwhile, the constraints faced are in the form of limited use of textbooks and difficulties in pronouncing and memorizing vocabulary in English. However, these lead them the opportunity to learn more from other resources.

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