**ABSTRACT**

The proper use of digital learning technologies in the classroom may boost student engagement, assist teachers in improving lesson ideas, enable individualized learning, and also assists learners in developing 21st-century abilities. ePals is one of global online learning platforms that can be used for connecting, communicating and collaborating with teachers and students all over the world. ePals is utilized to teach English that provides opportunities to English learners including young learners to communicate with people across countries. Descriptive qualitative method was used to acquire the data gained from observation and interview. The findings revealed that the use of ePals for young learners becomes effective teaching and learning process to connect with students all over the world as a media to use the target language. Young learners were enthusiastic about activities of the project made by the teacher with school partners through ePals that allow young learners to communicate with foreigners using English, even though there were some problems encountered by the teacher and young learners about the internet connection and language. Hence, with the success to bring the experience of using the target language for young learners, the use of ePals with different levels is highly suggested.

**Keywords:** ePals, media, ICT, Young Learners
1. INTRODUCTION

In this millennial era, technology becomes an essential part of life, especially in the use of information and communication. One of the requirements to achieve the application of industry 4.0 is the competency to speak English, mainly to communicate, both spoken and written (Liza & Akmar, 2018). The proficiency of English is essential because nearly all global information sources in various aspects of life are using English language (Durand, 2006). Nowadays, many educational institutions are aware with the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies), especially in English language classrooms. Teachers need govern ICT in this industry 4.0, since students from the Z and Alpha Generations favor technology-based learning (Adzhari & Din, 2021). ICT has become a rudimentary part of instruction as it has a worldwide influence on education policy in many developed countries (Haffiah, 2020), including Indonesia.

Nevertheless, since the introduction of the curriculum in 1994, English subject is not required in primary school in Indonesia because it goes through many considerations. Based on SK Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan No. 060/U/1993 on February 25th, English subject in primary school is not included in the compulsory subject but as the local content. Local content requires that the Standard of Competencies is attached to match with the potential and characteristics of specific regions since it has been nationally standardization, it is the teachers’ task to adapt to suit local content requirements (Depdiknas, 2006a). Whereas, English subject in primary schools is essential in the fourth industrial revolution. This situation encourages several primary schools following the Indonesian government policy to organize English education as the local content. Since the enthusiasm of the English teachers to create a positive and interactive learning environment, technology becomes one of the effective teaching tools to activate young learners in the learning process, which is in line with the industry 4.0.

Utilizing technology for teaching is recently used to promote effective learning and support the use of target language. Technology through many online platforms can bridge students’ need to communicate using the language they have learnt. ePals is one platform that presents connection, communication, and collaboration for teachers and students all over the world (ePals, 2019). To investigate the use of ePals in promoting English communication among students all over the world, a descriptive qualitative study was conducted in SD Muhammadiyah 08 Dau since the English teacher has been using ePals as an online learning platform in learning English for recent years. The website provides content that can facilitate learning English and offers teachers to make an online classroom that can connect with teachers who are joining ePals from various countries and do a collaborative project among students around the world. Hence, the use of ePals facilitates young learners to communicate with foreigners so that students are really used of English through ICT while using ePals by international classroom collaboration with teachers and students all over the world. In teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), teachers should know the characteristics of young learners. According to Harmer (2001:38) mentioned that young learners tend to get bored easily, and they have a limited interest span; hence classroom activities need to be as attractive and exciting as possible so that the students can easily understand the materials. The use of ICT for young learners is a tool for learning that is interesting to them, and ICT can help to provide a source of knowledge for students because of technological advancement, and all the educators demanded to find modern media to teach. According to Gawi (2012) found that in learning English, the younger students, the easier to acquire the target language. Therefore, by using ePals, students may have experiences in communicating using the English language by practicing their language skills by communicating with foreigners in order to exchange information and sharing ideas or knowledge. Besides, Khanom (2018) found that the use of ICT for education is needed; students motivated to learn the language efficiently because of the technological environment and understand the knowledge from an outside textbook.

Although the use of modern technology is beneficial for teachers and students in the learning process, teachers must understand the potential role of technology, especially for educational purposes. Not all English teachers can apply ICT effectively, and the possible obstacles may occur while using ICT. As stated by Habibiu et al. (2012) found that some teachers have difficulties in using ICT related to lack of software problems such as network connectivity or low internet speed, lack of sufficient training, lack of learning equipment tools and resources, the unwillingness teachers to use the new technology, lack of skills and knowledge, time limitations, and lack of
confidence. Furthermore, another barrier is the lack of school funds to get hardware and software related to the use of computers or the internet in ICT utilization (Al-Alwani, 2005). The teacher’s role as a facilitator needs to be improved. Therefore, they need technical support and the training of teachers in using ICT for educational purposes, so that they can be proficient when using ICT from the beginning in order to teach impressively. Hence, this research with descriptive qualitative method aims to find out the implementation of ePals for young learners in teaching and learning English, especially at SD Muhammadiyah 8 Dau and describe the problems faced by the teacher and students when utilizing ePals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching English for Young Learners

Young learners, namely the students that are beginning in the first year of formal education (Philips, 1993). Then, children in the 6-12 age range that categorized as young learners in elementary or primary school (Suyanto, 2007). To teach English as a foreign language, teachers should know the characteristics of young learners to stimulate them in the learning process. There are the characteristics of young learners, as stated by Scott and Yteberg (1990):

1. Young learners know that rules govern everything in the world.
2. Young learners understand the situations immediately than understand their language used.
3. Young learners have their understanding from their eyes, hands, and ears.
4. Young learners can use their logical reasoning.
5. Young learners have a concentration span and concise attention.
6. Young learners do not always understand what adults are talking about.
7. Young learners like to play activities that make them enjoy learning.
8. Young learners have enthusiasm for positive learning.

Teaching English to young learners (TEYL) in primary school can be challenging for teachers because they need to know the characteristics well of young learners. Young learners learn language unconsciously and naturally. Young learners tend to enjoy fun learning situations, and they have much natural curiosity while learning something. Related to this, Harmer (2007) mentioned that in the process of teaching and learning, teachers should use techniques and appropriate media based on the students’ ability, and the instruction is crucial in foreign language class activity because it can provide comprehensible input for the learner at the right level. In order to achieve optimal results, language learning must adapt to the needs of learners. When language learners are still at the elementary school or primary level, teachers must consider the characteristics of their students because at this level; children have unique characteristics that were always changing. Therefore, teaching young learners with distinctive character requires interesting and attractive teaching strategy (Ratri, Iswahyuni & Lailiyah, 2018). Children have a sense of high curiosity who likes activities that stimulate them in the learning process; most young learners are curious naturally and will automatically have many questions about something that they want to know (Stephens, 2007). By providing interesting material, it will encourage students’ interaction and engage the sense of responses.

The teacher needs to be creative to create a fun learning situation in class. The learning strategies emphasize the involvement of students to connect with learning material and related to real-life situations that can encourage students to be able to apply in their real lives. Teachers should know the sources of language learning for young learners, among others are (Sukarno, 2008):

a. Learning resources are the primary materials that triggered children to learn and ordered an exciting activity that relates to their daily lives.

b. Learning resources should be matched with children's abilities. Hence, English educators can make materials exciting and useful for young learners.

c. In techniques and resources, there must be a difference. For example, stories, videos, songs, games, and others as resources.

The most important thing about learning English for young learner is experience of using the target language and figure out how the language works. To construct meaning, it can be completed by social interaction to exchange information. They need to talk in community which requires
students to use English in order to negotiate meaning in the real context (Ratri & Puspitasari, 2019).

The Use of ICT in English Language Classroom

The use of ICT in English language classrooms has been needed to keep up with development of industry 4.0. The integration of ICT in the English language classroom is essential because it enables students to understand the concept of material and their collaborative learning skills. Teachers have opportunities to teach students effectively by using technology includes the use of the internet, software, and hardware in terms of the teacher can provide a friendly role for students (Ratheeswari, 2018). Moreover, the use of ICT in English language classrooms becomes a favorite tool in teaching and learning, seeing that the implication can be used in the application of understanding and learning materials, students' attention, motivation, perception and responding the materials easily (Khanom, 2018). In addition, ICT becomes the element and component to gives a contribution to education because the application of ICT supports an effective learning situation (Jamiesen-Procter et al, 2013). ICT can help both students and teachers in several ways while learning a language. Every learning activity involves two active actors; there are teachers and students. The teacher, as a facilitator, is the creator of students learning conditions that is designed systematically, and continuously. Then, students are the actor who enjoy the learning conditions that are created by the teacher. Hence, the implementation of ICT must be built into a reliable education system to achieve the improvements in equity and learning. Therefore, English educators must have the right competencies in guiding and preparing the generation of this era to be able to compete and succeed in this digital era.

For teachers, ICT becomes one of the right choices in teaching English for primary school since the use of technology in the learning process is useful for students, namely to simplify and accelerate the students’ works and communications. Furthermore, ICT becomes central to integration among teachers’ belief in the learning process (Mumtaz, 2000). Besides, ICT can attract young learners in the learning situation, it is also fun because students as young learners are enthusiastic. This is because ICT as an equipment that makes students enjoy the learning environment, and enables students' active participation in activities to increase necessary knowledge and information (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). The effectiveness of ICT in the learning process help to manage the condition of the classroom. Moreover, The use of ICT could help students in terms of setting classroom management because students can focus more, be well-behaved, be enthusiastic as well during the lesson (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). Besides helping to create a conducive learning situation for students, another important role of information and communication technology in the learning process is to provide a set of media and tools which make the motivation for students to learn. Also, the integration of ICT in primary school with appropriate curriculum will support resources to encourage the growth of a technology-based community in the application of industry 4.0.

ePALS

ePals is a secure global online platform that can be accessed in website epals.com. The use of ePals becomes an effective media to teach English for young learners, and teachers can create fun learning environments for students by using ePals to activate them in the learning process. Yamamoto et al., (2010: 109) stated that teaching from the perspective of web teaching tools shows the need to examine the way teachers’ teach, how students learn, and the fundamental of culture. ePals presents connection, communication, and collaboration for teachers and students all over the world (ePals, 2019). The use of ePals becomes attractive for teaching and learning English because students and teachers can interact with peers from different countries who were joining ePals by sending their video or picture and written messages back in a classroom collaboration. The contents filter of ePals divided into eight categories. The filters such as countries, students’ age ranges, languages spoken, average class sizes, subjects, interests, grades taught, and specializations, which every filter has selected depends on the teacher’s needs and to find teachers all over the world who are joining ePals with criteria that are determined by the teacher (ePals, 2019). The filters could be helpful for teachers to choose class categories that are appropriate for the students’ characteristics.
in their class and the best possible classroom partners.

The main purpose of learning English is the students as young learners can use it in communicating verbally. Therefore, the ability to communicate in early childhood needs to be considered and well designed so that they really practice communicating using English that suitable for their character. ePals enables students to communicate with foreigners in order to learn English by activating to tell them in the process of learning by sharing their ideas, knowledge, cultures, arts, literacies, experiences, and other information from people different countries. It can be said that ePals as a tool for teaching students to value diversity and respect others in order to cross-culture understanding (Dias & Santiago, 2018).

2. METHODS

The research design used in this research is under the umbrella of descriptive qualitative design to achieve the objectives of the research. Qualitative research is a nature of the process to investigate the human problem or social, which the data collected by describing in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998). Moreover, descriptive qualitative design is concerned with describing a phenomenon about how or why something has happened and knowing the characteristics of the phenomenon itself (Nassaji, 2015). The research conducted at SD Muhammadiyah 8 which is using ePals as one of the media to enhance English learning. In the observation phase, 20 fifth grade students and an English teacher at SD Muhammadiyah 8 Dau were involved in this study. The observation was done until the data saturated. Observation checklist and field notes were used to collect data in the observation phase. Interview was also done to the English teacher and a representative of young learners from fifth-grade class who have used ePals in teaching and learning English with a semi-formal interview using interview guideline as the instrument.

The qualitative data analysis technique used technique from (Miles & Huberman, 1994), those are data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification. Data source triangulation, which means to get the data from different sources with the same technique, was used to check the trustworthiness of the data Sugiyono (2013). Then, the researcher used participatory observation, in-depth interviews as the data sources. The data sources were from the report of field notes, observation checklist, teacher’s interview guide, and students’ interview guide to obtain in depth information.

3. RESULTS/FINDINGS

The Implementation of ePals for Young Learners

The teacher utilized ePals and make benefit of it in involving students in the projects corresponded with overseas partner teachers using English as lingua franca. As stated previously, ePals enables a teacher to be connecting, communicating and collaborating with teachers and students all over the world. The use of ePals facilitates English learning to be more attractive in line with the use of ICT to deal with one of the characters of the 21st-century as media or tools in teaching and learning, especially in English classrooms. Here is the page display that first appeared on the web epals.com.

![Figure 1 ePals Home Page](Source: epals.com)
In order to have an account in ePals, a user or teacher need to sign up first and complete the information about the teacher’s profile. The teacher can find connections by selecting the content filters in ePals divided into eight filters, they are countries, students’ age ranges, languages spoken, average class sizes, subjects, interests, grades taught, and specializations, which every filter has selected depends on the teacher’s interest and suitable with students’ characteristics. Thus, the display will appear based on the filter chosen and show the list of teachers who can be invited by the teacher to connect or collaborate.

![ePals Filter](https://www.epals.com/#/connections)

**ePals**

(Source: [https://www.epals.com/#/connections](https://www.epals.com/#/connections))

From the observation and interviews, it revealed that the teacher and young learners can use ePals in various ways. The projects agreed with partner teachers from some countries require not only ePals application, but also other media to connect. The projects in ePals has purposes such as subject-based exchange, culture exchange, and language exchange (ePals, 2019). Moreover, from the observation and interviews, it can be found that the activities of the project allow students to focus on their language skills such as writing, speaking, and reading, also intercultural knowledge.

**Writing skill**

The students can do collaborative writing when the students already have a project about the topic that allowed them to write and share their ideas. For example, based on the teacher’s interview, when the students had a project to make greeting cards, and the students have shared the greeting card to their pen-pals overseas. The topic was about Christmas and New Year celebration. Then, the students are allowed to create a greeting card with their creativity and as attractive as possible. After the students send the greeting card through ePals with their accounts, their pen-pals also would send a reply. The students could also learn and practice their vocabulary through writing, but the topic of writing activity should be simple and familiar for young learners. Therefore, the topic discussed should be appropriate with the age of learners that make young learners enthusiastic and enjoy learning English. The pictures below are the documentations related to the project in making greeting card by fifth-grade students from SD Muhammadiyah 8 Dau and Bil School of Okullari from Turkey.

![Figure 4.3 The Examples of Writing project](https://www.epals.com/#/connections)
Speaking skill

One of the project while utilizing ePals is the implementation of speaking skill. Speaking skills are applied by students when the students had a project to make a video that was sent through ePals and oral communication when the students did video conference activity with students overseas. The students were able to send a short video to advance their speaking skills. One exemplary activity they have done is that the students recorded the brief introduction orally, and next the video would be sent to their pen-pals through ePals. Even though their speaking ability was not perfect because the students had difficulties in their pronunciation or the habit of using their mother tongue, but with the help of the collaboration project in ePals can motivate them to use the target language to make the communication possible.

Reading skill

ePals provides good online resources. Many resources can be accessed in ePals to help students enjoy the learning activity. The students are able to find something interesting that relevant to the task. One reading activity that was in group reading sessions was that after the teacher gives the task to make a greeting card in written form, then the student would automatically read the replies from their overseas friends who had replied to the greeting cards. Another activity was when the teacher gave the task to answer questions from the short text, the students directly skimmed or scanned the text to find the information needed. ePals provides a teacher profile feature to give descriptions of the interests from the teacher, also the information about the country, grade taught, student age range, type of school, name of school, subject, specialization, and language used. Accordingly, the teacher profile facilitates other teachers to join the class collaboration based on their needs and class taught. Here is the example of the teacher’s profile from China who has an interest in the reading and writing project.

Intercultural knowledge

Using ePals to promote English learning conveys greater knowledge to transfer which are cultures, identity, and ethnicity. With cultural differences, students can share information with their pen-pals by sharing experiences, knowledge, ideas, arts, and others about their countries. For example, in the video conference, students performed Indonesian cultures such as traditional dance, tapak suci, and crafts from Indonesia to show and share the uniqueness of Indonesian culture. While Turkish students, they showed traditional dance from Turkey. It meant that the project that was made by the teacher in ePals promoted intercultural knowledge between different countries for students could learn cultures exchange. Understanding the culture of other people who live in different countries is very important in the primary school because cross-culture understanding includes an understanding of values, beliefs, habits, customs, language, and also ways of communicating for young learners (Dias & Santiago, 2018).
Subsequently, the data obtained from interviews with the English teacher and the representative of students. Based on the interviews was conducted by the researcher, it disclosed that the use of ePals was significant in learning English. The students have experience in learning effectively, efficiently, and flexibly.

The teacher’s interview was done on Tuesday, November 19th 2019, the teacher clarified that the use of ePals in learning English is sufficient for young learners because the world today has become an era of globalization that causes everything practically and effectively. Nowadays, many children cannot be detached from using gadgets, to be more positive, the teacher provided learning English through media ePals to connect students around the world to create international environment. The students can reach many learning resources except textbooks through ePals. Therefore, the students used gadgets for more constructive purposes, they were expected to be active with the help of technology. When the students had a project in classroom collaboration, English became the language used to communicate. Thus, ePals becomes a medium for communication to students that is efficient in learning English language.

The use of ePals is also flexible because it does not require much budget, the teacher does not directly invited foreigners to come to school but by merely communicating through ePals. The students’ accounts were controlled by the teacher and connected to the teacher by adding the students in one virtual class in ePals. In other words, one class gets an account that is controlled by the teacher, but each student still received an account with his/her own password. Moreover, the student’s account connected with parents and parents can manage the account by signing in the student’s account through email and password that was given by the teacher. The teacher and parents could monitor the incoming messages in student’s account. In addition, if the student want to send a message or file to pen-pals, the teacher can give correction or edit the messages before the students sending it to their pen-pals, since in most cases, there were writing errors or the unclear message to convey the meaning. However, the use of ePals entirely becomes media to deliver the materials such as vocabulary, writing, speaking, reading, language, also intercultural knowledge based on the project that the teacher gave to the students.

The Problems Faced while Utilizing ePals

From the teacher’s interview, the problems faced in utilizing ePals in English teaching and learning process were about the language for students’ communication and the internet connection. When communicating through ePals, students and teachers connected with other students and teachers overseas, and it requires English as lingua franca to communicate. The teacher stated that sometimes students felt difficulties in expressing meaning in a word or sentence, however, they could ask the teacher to help them in arranging words or sentences to communicate using English through ePals. To help the students to be more independent when answering questions from overseas friends, the teacher asked the students to guess and find the synonyms, antonyms, or others example of a sentence and words.

Next, ePals is a hi-tech platform that requires a strong signal to be able to connect well. For example, the teacher wants to send the invitation to make a project with a class partner in other countries that managed by the teacher and the request or invitation was pending because the internet connection does not work, so when delays occur, it can impact the project that is projected to be. In fact, a poor internet connection can cause bad quality video and audio, delays and disturb the communication. Based on the teacher’s interview and the observation, a poor internet
connection is caused by low signal, bad weather, and climate because Indonesia has different time zone and weather with the connected country, therefore the school had to synchronize with the school partner based on their school hours. Related to this, when there was a video conference with Turkey on Friday, January 10th 2020, sometimes the quality video was inadequate because there was a storm strikes Turkey, so it affected the internet connection.

In line with the statement from the teacher, students’ interview also uncovered similar difficulties that were about the internet connection and the language used to communicate. Based on the interview, young learners who live in a country especially in Indonesia where English has not become the first language and mother tongue feel sweat using the target language. This inhibit is due to their limited vocabulary in choosing words; their mispronunciation and sometimes their failure in making coherent sentences. The difficulty also happened when they decoded meaning when the students were asked a question from overseas students.

However, having this nuisance, the students obtained new knowledge on how to use the language and how to communicate using the target language. They got new vocabularies and knew how to convey the messages clearly when they are communicating with the foreigner and expressing words or sentences verbally. Hence, a teacher needs to be creative to answer the student’s questions based on the situation that has been asked by students. Nevertheless, based on the interview with the students, they love to learn English by communicating with their pen-pals in other countries. When there was a project, they were excited to do their assignments and enjoy using ePals even though they had difficulties in transferring meaning and internet connection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Collection Instruments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How is the implementation of ePals by the teacher and students in teaching and learning English?</td>
<td>- The video conference was held by teacher and students to continue the project that was approved by the teacher through ePals with school partner that connected SD Muhammadiyah 8 Dau with Bil School of Okullari from Turkey in grade 5 with the topic about Introduction and Cross Culture Understanding. - In the live conference activity, students were enthusiasts and enjoy following the activity and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The result shows that almost all the points that include in the observation checklist were relevant to the observation. There are 21 out of 22 statements answered yes or agree with the statements. It concluded that ePals is one of the interactive and useful media in teaching and learning English and ePals is media for communication to connect the next project with other media.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The result shows that the use of ePals is used by the teacher to make a collaborative project of teachers from several countries. Moreover, the use of ePals was significant in learning English, such as the students have experience in learning effectively, efficiently, and flexibly.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The result shows that the use of ePals was attractive to the students in learning English because the project that made by the teacher was fun for students, the students got new vocabularies. The students were excited when they can communicate with foreigners.</td>
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## Table 4.1 Data Triangulation

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<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Collection Instruments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the problems faced by the teacher and students in utilizing ePals at SD Muhammadiyah 8 Dau?</td>
<td><strong>Field Notes</strong>&lt;br&gt;- While doing the observation in live conference activity, the problem faced was about the internet connection seeing that the quality video sometimes was inadequate because there was a storm strikes the connected country. Also, time zone differences with connected country affect the school had to synchronize with the school partner based on their school time, which implemented ePals out of school hours.</td>
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From the table above, it can be concluded that from the first research question reported the same thing which concludes from data collection instrument, the use of ePals as an English learning media was significant in teaching and learning. Moreover, it also reveals that the use of ePals facilitates teacher and students learning English in various ways and then it involved other media or platform assist the completion of the project. From the second research question also reported the same thing from data collection instruments that reported the problem faced in utilizing ePals by teacher and students were about the internet connection and from teacher’s interview, students had difficulty in language to communicate, but the students still want to learn English with help and supervision by the teacher.

### 4. DISCUSSION

The use of ICT gives positive influences on the teaching and learning process. It is an undeniable fact that the implementation of technology in the English language classroom could help to increase learning motivation for students (Khanom, 2018). ePals as the implementation of ICT presents connecting, collaborating, and communicating with foreigners in a fun way. Based on the findings, the students were very fascinated by the use of ePals as the English learning media, and they were excited and enthusiastic in the learning process. This is in line with the characteristics of young learners from Scott and Ytreberg’s theory (1990) mentioned that young learners have enthusiasm for positive learning and they like to play activities that make them enjoy to learn. It means that when teaching young learners, the teacher must be creative to give meaningful and interesting activities that make young learners enthustiat to learn.

Based on the findings, the activities of the project allow students to focus on their language skills such as writing, speaking, and reading, also intercultural knowledge. Young learners who have intercultural knowledge, they will better appreciate and understand the cultural differences that exist in this world. The activities done by teachers’ collaboration through ePals can help the learners to make authentic and meaningful learning experiences to develop students’ multiliteracy and cultural gaps between different countries (Dias and Santiago, 2018). Moreover, the use of ePals provides effective, efficient, and flexible learning experiences for young learners. The implementation of ICT becomes the component to give a contribution to education because the application of ICT supports the effective learning situation (Jamiesen-Procter et al, 2013). The findings of this research showed that the use of ePals allowed students to join activities that make fun learning experiences, and the students can learn English while exchanging ideas, knowledge, and cultures with foreigners based on the project made by the teachers’ collaboration. ePals provide students community and environment to force them to use the target language. It offers the students to have the opportunity to practice the talk using English and discover themselves how the language works (Ratri & Puspitasari, 2019). Therefore, the chance to use English in community which entails students to use English in order to convey meaning in the real context is fulfilled through ePals.

The use of ePals becomes a tool for the internationalization learning experience for young learners to communicate with foreigners using English language. The use of ePals becomes a tool for internationalization that could help students using the English language to participate in multicultural interactions (Dias and Santiago, 2018). Moreover, ePals becomes an excellent resource as a medium or tool for the teacher to teach English for young learners effectively.

Integrating the use of ICT into teaching and learning is a process that not easy for some people, and people may have encountered some difficulties. Many factors cause difficulties in utilizing ICT. Based on the findings of this research, the problem faced by teacher and students were about internet connection. This resembles the research findings of Salehi et al., (2012) which found that teachers believed that low internet speed prevents them from using the implementation of ICT at school. Other research finding which supports recent findings by Habibu et al., (2012) found that lack of software problems such as network connectivity or low internet speed affected the barriers to ICT utilization. The previous study from Chorida (2017) has a different problem related to the implementation of ICT with this present study because the problem faced by teacher and students were different. In the previous study, Chorida (2017) reported that the problem of using the media was about the teacher had difficulties in adapting the media to use the new technology, and the students encountered no problem faced. While in this present study, the teacher had no difficulty in adapting ePals for the first time, and the problem faced by the teacher was about software problem such as network connectivity and low internet speed, and students had the same difficulty with the teacher about the internet connection.

In addition, the students had difficulties in convey meaning through English, but the students were assisted by the teacher to make the communication understandable. However, students admitted that ePals is the interactive learning media to learn English by activating students to communicate with foreigners in a fun way that can explore students’ ideas, knowledge, cultures, arts, experiences, and other information from people in different countries. Hence, the users should increase internet speed to provide a good connection when using ePals.

5. CONCLUSION
All in all, the use of ePals as an English learning media gave a positive impact in teaching and learning for the teacher and young learners. Even though there were problems encountered by the teacher and students, students were still enthusiastic utilizing ePals as language learning media. The use of ePals becomes a media for international classroom-based with learning experiences that provide collaborative projects of teachers from different countries. Moreover, ePals is not only used for international classroom collaboration, but it can be also used for classroom collaboration with the teachers from the same region or country, depending on the teachers’ aim. In addition, ePals becomes a media in terms of cyber home learning for teacher and students during the pandemic of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). As the COVID-19 spread, the government enforces Work From Home (WFH) to all of society for working and learning online at home, including teachers and students. It can be said that ePals an online learning platform that can connect teachers and students to make an interactive learning environment. Then, the researcher suggests that further researchers can conduct more research about the use of ePals with different levels, and the use of ePals is very beneficial as an online learning platform in terms of cyber home learning for teachers and students during the COVID-19 pandemic

6. REFERENCES
