

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the research. It begins with the revelation of the background of the research, the research questions, the purpose of the research, and the contribution of the study.

A. Background of the Research

The study of English has become increasingly crucial in today's globalized world due to its role as a universal language in education (Khomysyak, 2024; Zhang, 2024). English is the primary language of instruction in many of the world's top universities, such as Harvard and Oxford. Mastery of English is often a prerequisite for admission to these institutions, which opens doors to high-quality education and research opportunities. Additionally, a significant portion of academic literature and online content is available in English, providing access to a vast pool of knowledge that is otherwise limited to those who do not speak the language.

The majority of today's innovation comes from the technology sector, which operates primarily in English. The significance of English in the tech world stems from its status as the main language on the internet, with 80% of stored information being in English. Moreover, English is crucial for global communication and collaboration in the tech field, as highlighted by the fact that more than half of the world's scientific journals are in English (Demirbulak & Zeyrek, 2022). Because of this, knowing how to communicate in English is crucial for everyone who wants to interact with new technologies and work on creative initiatives.

Recognizing the importance of English today, the Indonesian government issued *Permendikbudristek* Number 12/2024, mandating English instruction from Grade 3 in elementary schools. Sri Lestari, an English lecturer at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya, stated in detik.com (2024) that English is essential for both spoken and written communication and is commonly used in public information. Proficiency in English provides significant advantages in accessing knowledge. Anindito (2024) Head of the Educational Standards, Curriculum, and

Assessment Agency, noted in cnnindonesia.com, that English is the primary language of the scientific community. All Southeast Asian countries require English at the elementary level, and Indonesia plans to implement this policy in 2027-2028.

Identifying that other adjacent nations have implemented English at the elementary level, Indonesia will do so in the third grade. The implementation at this level agrees with the research results. The period from birth to around six years old is characterized by rapid cognitive development, making it an ideal time for acquiring new languages (Fatima, 2018; Maja Adžija & Sindik, 2014). During this stage, children's brains are highly plastic and receptive, allowing them to absorb linguistic information more naturally and efficiently than at any other time in their lives. By age five, most children have already mastered the basic sound system and grammar of their first language, and they typically have a vocabulary of several thousand words (Hoff, 2009). This remarkable achievement in language acquisition during early childhood underscores the potential for introducing additional languages, such as English, during this period.

Starting language learning at a young age also allows children to have more extended exposure to the language, facilitating deeper immersion and better retention. Furthermore, early exposure to a foreign language has been found to enhance cognitive development, including improved problem-solving skills, greater mental flexibility, and better multitasking abilities (Wulandari et al., 2022). Ultimately, this early engagement with language and culture cultivates a sense of global awareness and intercultural competence, which is essential in today's interconnected world (Hermawan & Prayoga, 2022). These cognitive and cultural benefits provide compelling reasons for implementing English language education at the elementary level, beginning as early as Grade 3, as mandated by the recent policy changes in Indonesia.

In addition to formal education that includes English in the curriculum, non-formal educational institutions like English courses have become a popular choice for parents who want their children to learn English, as these courses play a crucial role in supporting language learning. English courses provide several benefits for parents aiming to improve their children's language skills. These courses are

generally available for all student levels, from elementary to adult, ensuring that learners of all ages can access quality English education. This institution contributes to students' academic excellence, especially their English skills (Juliarta, 2021). With the facilities provided to the students, from interesting materials and the latest instruments in the class to qualified teachers, the institution believes students can progress significantly in their English language proficiency.

Non-formal education institutions like English courses play a crucial role in supporting formal education by providing a supportive and flexible learning environment. These institutions are invaluable resources for parents seeking additional language education for their children, ultimately contributing to their overall academic and personal development. In these settings, classrooms serve as safe environments where students can practice their English language skills with guidance from teachers, allowing them to test themselves, determine proficiency levels, and track progress (Maxom, 2009).

The English course where the researcher will conduct the research applies classroom settings in its teaching-learning process that make students feel different from their formal schools. One of the classroom settings that is applied there is seating arrangement. The best seating arrangement in a classroom involves considering various factors such as student interaction, teacher attention distribution, and the physical environment. Horseshoe seating arrangements can promote student discussion and eliminate awkwardness (Bugis et al., 2021). This type lets the center of the classroom empty to have fun activities with the teacher like playing games. This setting also allows the teachers and the students to see each other face-to-face without barriers. Teachers can observe the students' activity while they are doing the exercises or manage the students doing role-play activities.

The seating arrangement in the classroom can influence teachers to interact with their students effectively. Many strategies can be applied in the classroom that can make the teacher and the students interaction fun especially when teaching English to young learners. Teaching English to young learners involves implementing effective strategies to enhance their learning experience. Techniques such as Listen and Repeat, in-pair activities, group activities, and outdoor activities

are beneficial (Aslamiah, 2022; Sulistyawati, Ria Puji Lestari, 2019). These strategies not only increase student participation, understanding, and memorization of material but also boost their interest and motivation in the learning process. Additionally, using techniques like flashcards, miming, and identifying tasks can aid in teaching vocabulary effectively to young learners (Lelawati et al., 2018). It is crucial for teachers to be creative, engaging, and patient, considering the unique characteristics of young learners such as short attention spans, high activity levels, and imaginative nature (Prayatni, 2019). By incorporating a variety of engaging strategies tailored to young learners, teachers can create a fun and stimulating English learning environment. To apply those methods, an appropriate classroom environment, creative teachers with proper materials, and active student participation are needed. Effective interaction between teachers and students will occur if all these aspects are present.

Essentially, teachers form the backbone of the educational system, guiding students from ignorance to intelligence and from incompetence to competence, transforming them from failure to success and from being unmotivated to becoming engaged learners (Tgk Armis et al., 2022). Teachers who consistently interact in English in the classroom significantly impact students' English skills. Research emphasizes the importance of classroom interaction in teaching speaking skills, highlighting how it helps assess students' abilities and boosts their confidence in speaking English (Gandari & Nurcholis, 2024). Effective classroom interaction, where teachers engage students through various methods like accepting ideas, asking questions, and providing encouragement, is crucial for meaningful language learning experiences (Badie, 2023).

To make the consistency of classroom interaction, using English as a Medium of Interaction (EMI) with teachers feel motivated to use English more effectively in the classroom, leading to improved student engagement and language acquisition (Solihat et al., 2023). Moreover, when the teachers become effective, they can create a fun and active classroom, encouraging not only teacher-to-student but also student-to-student interaction (Bağ, Martı, and Bayyurt 2016). In English classroom interaction, teachers become fundamental figures in this setting due to their

multifaceted roles. They guide pupils toward knowledge, competencies, and values, adapting the classroom environment to enhance student learning capacities and motivation. This fosters interactions that lead to effective learning (Ibrahim et al., 2021). The interaction facilitated by teacher guidance and peer testing is essential for enhancing learning outcomes and student engagement (Liu & Hu, 2022).

Despite significant efforts to maintain consistency in teaching, challenges persist in teaching English vocabulary to young learners. These challenges include the need for innovative strategies to engage young learners, a lack of parental and environmental support, and the perceived low quality of English teachers. Additionally, teachers often face obstacles such as low student motivation, negative perceptions of the English language, time constraints, insufficient teaching resources, disorganized classroom conditions, and speaking anxiety (Nasution et al., 2023). These difficulties can hinder students from lacking the initiative to interact with the teacher or their peers. This can be due to fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, or not understanding the material immediately (Lesiana et al., 2023; Mubarak et al., 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to adopt supportive and encouraging teaching approaches. Teacher-student interactions, including self-correction, social skills development, and behavioural management, contribute to improved learning outcomes and a supportive learning environment (Lesiana et al., 2023; Seno et al., 2022). The importance of teacher-student interaction in English learning cannot be overstated, as it lays the foundation for effective communication skills and overall academic success.

Teachers, including male and female teachers, can cope with the challenges of classroom interaction among students as teachers play a crucial role in encouraging students to participate. Providing praise and feedback can motivate students to be more active in learning and increase their confidence. Howe (1997) stated that female teachers may offer more encouragement and sympathy compared to male teachers. This can encourage students who fear making mistakes or need interactive activities. Some studies suggest that students may have preferences for teachers of the same gender, which could influence their engagement and participation in class (Alshebl, 2021). Moreover, gender influences classroom

interaction patterns, highlighting the importance of reciprocal relationships and shared communication for effective learning processes (Bağ, Martı, and Bayyurt, 2016). Teachers' gender plays a significant role in shaping the classroom environment and student-teacher interactions. Research indicates that male teachers are perceived as having higher levels of attitude and attention-holding skills than female teachers, potentially influencing the quality of interaction with students (Malik et al., 2022).

Research suggests that male and female teachers may exhibit different interaction patterns due to gender, age, and social factors (Alannisa 2018; Bağ, Martı, and Bayyurt 2016). For instance, some studies indicate male teachers may use a consultative style, while female teachers lean towards a formal approach (Yusuf et al., 2023). Teachers' ages can also influence their communication styles, with older teachers potentially using a more intimate approach compared to younger ones (Taslim et al., 2023).

Understanding these differences is important because it highlights the complexity of classroom dynamics. It reveals how various social and personal factors can influence teaching practices. This knowledge can be extremely valuable. By exploring how gender and other factors shape teacher-student interaction, we can develop more inclusive teaching methods that cater to the diverse needs of students (Amir & Jakob, 2020). This can lead to improved teaching practices, more effective teacher training, and ultimately, more tremendous student success and well-being.

Despite the valuable insights into gendered interaction styles, a key gap remains: a comprehensive understanding of how these styles impact English vocabulary learning. This study addresses this gap by investigating how male and female teachers interact with young learners when teaching English vocabulary and how these interactions influence student learning outcomes.

B. Research Focus

This research focuses on investigating the interactions of male and female teachers when teaching English vocabulary to young learners. Specifically, it explores how these interactions differ in teaching strategies and communication

styles and examines young learners' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these interactions in English vocabulary learning.

C. Research Questions

In the researcher's investigation of male and female teachers' teaching vocabulary to young learners in classroom interaction, two interesting questions emerge,

1. How do male and female teachers' classroom interactions differ in terms of teaching strategies and communication styles when introducing new English vocabulary to young learners?
2. What are the perceptions of young learners regarding the effectiveness of male and female teachers' classroom interaction in English vocabulary learning?

D. Objectives of The Research

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the differences in teaching strategies and communication styles of male and female teachers when introducing new English vocabulary to young learners.
2. To explore students' perceptions of their teachers' classroom interactions in English vocabulary learning.

E. Significance of The Research

The study will contribute to the existing body of research in several ways:

1. Practical Significance
 - a. Improving Teaching Practices:
 - 1) Understanding Teaching Strategies: The study offers a deeper understanding of the teaching strategies employed by male and female teachers in vocabulary instruction. This knowledge can help educators tailor their teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students better, ultimately improving learning outcomes.
 - 2) Impact on Student Learning: By assessing the impacts of male and female teachers' interactions on young learners' vocabulary gain, the

study provides valuable information on effective teaching practices that can enhance student learning experiences and academic success.

3) Informing Teacher Training and Professional Development: Findings from the study can inform teacher training programs and professional development initiatives, equipping educators with the knowledge and skills needed to create engaging and effective learning environments for vocabulary instruction.

b. Educational Policies and Practices:

1) Enhancing Educational Policies and Practices: The study's findings may also inform educational policies and practices aimed at promoting gender equity and improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools, ultimately contributing to the overall improvement of the education system.

2) Practical Benefits for Parents and Non-Formal Education: The research highlights the role of non-formal educational institutions like English courses, which can complement formal education and play a crucial role in helping children develop their English language skills. These institutions offer an invaluable resource for parents seeking to provide their children with additional language education.

2. Theoretical significance

a. Insight into Gender Dynamics in Education:

Gender Dynamics: By examining how male and female teachers interact in teaching vocabulary, the study sheds light on gender dynamics within educational settings, providing valuable insights into how gender influences teaching approaches and classroom interactions. This theoretical understanding can contribute to the broader field of educational psychology and gender studies.

b. Contribution to Sociocultural Theory:

This study provides empirical data that supports and extends Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning. By focusing on teacher-student interactions,

the research highlights the role of dialogue and interaction in teaching English vocabulary, offering a nuanced analysis of how teacher gender and interaction styles influence student outcomes.

c. **Enhancing Theoretical Frameworks**

providing a comprehensive understanding of how teacher gender and interaction styles affect vocabulary learning. This approach can yield valuable insights that contribute to developing more inclusive and effective teaching frameworks.

The research adds to the growing body of literature on classroom interactions and language acquisition, providing new perspectives on the relationship between teacher gender and student learning outcomes. This can guide future research and theoretical developments in the field.

F. Previous Study

Some research results about male and female interaction with students in their English teaching in the classroom have found different outcomes. The research identified that female teachers may favor a more extroverted approach, emphasizing interaction and engagement (Rahimi & Asadollahi, 2012). This might translate to discussions, group work, and multi-sensory learning experiences. They may also prioritize building rapport and fostering a positive classroom environment (Rahimi and Asadollahi 2012).

However, some studies have found that male teachers may initially have more "teacher talk time" (Bağ et al., 2016). This could lead to increased student participation but might also suggest a more directive teaching style. Interestingly, this research also suggests female teachers engage in more collaborative interactions, particularly with female students (Bağ, Martı, and Bayyurt 2016). This highlights the potential for both authoritative and supportive approaches within different genders.

Furthermore, female teachers may ask more questions, encouraging critical thinking and student participation (Septiana et al., 2019). This contrasts with a potential tendency for male teachers to focus on lectures and directions. It's important to note that these are tendencies; individual teachers may not always

follow these patterns.

There's also the possibility of unintended bias. Studies suggest female teachers might give less attention to quieter students, who may often be female (Alannisa, 2018; Li, 2023). This underscores the importance of teacher awareness to ensure equitable participation for all students.

