

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study by presenting the research background, research questions, research purposes, significance of the study, research scope, theoretical framework, and previous studies.

A. Research Background

English language learning takes place at various educational levels, ranging from young learners to adult learners, each with different cognitive, emotional, and social characteristics. Self-regulation and emotional control are still developing in young learners, which are typically defined as children and early adolescents in primary and lower secondary education (Harmer, 2015). When it comes to learning English as a foreign language (EFL), young learners require greater guidance and external support from teachers not only to understand the material but also to actively participate, interact, and use English meaningfully in the classroom. Therefore, teaching English to young learners demands not only instructional competence but also effective motivational and classroom management strategies that can foster students' engagement in language learning activities (Soraya et al., 2022).

Motivation plays a crucial role in the learning process, particularly for young learners who are still developing self-regulation and frequently depend on external support from teachers. Motivation can be defined as an internal or social stimulus that encourages individuals to take action and actively engage in learning activities (Martins, 2024). Active engagement such as participation, interaction, and language use is an important part of learning a language because it gives students opportunities to practice and improve their ability to communicate (Soraya et al., 2022).

According to Ulfaminingsih et al. (2021), teachers often use praise and punishment as part of their classroom management strategies to regulate students' behavior and maintain motivation during classroom learning activities. When applied proportionately, praise can function as positive reinforcement that

supports students' motivation. On the other hand, punishment is generally used to address inappropriate behavior or rule violations.

The effects of rewards and punishments on student behavior and motivation have been shown in earlier research. Verbal praise, nonverbal appreciation, and structured consequences have been found to positively influence students' discipline and enthusiasm for learning (Kusumawati et al., 2023). In addition, English teachers employ various forms of rewards and punishments, including social, token, and material rewards, as well as presentation punishment and removal punishment (S. I. Putri et al., 2023). However, these studies focus on student responses and outcomes rather than exploring teachers' beliefs and professional reasoning behind the use of such strategies. Understanding teachers' perspectives is essential because teachers' beliefs, interpretations, and instructional decisions directly influence how praise and punishment strategies are selected and implemented in classroom practice (Yolanda, 2023).

The urgency of this study is further reinforced by the researcher's own experience during the Teaching Practicum Program at a junior high school. During the teaching practice, the researcher observed that Grade VII students frequently showed low motivation and reluctance to actively participate in English learning activities. Students tended to remain silent, avoid responding to questions, and showed limited willingness to use English during classroom interactions. However, when the cooperating teacher deliberately gave praise, rewards, and words of encouragement, a noticeable shift occurred. Students became more enthusiastic, more willing to raise their hands, and more actively engaged in the learning process. This direct classroom experience raised an important question: if praise and reward can visibly impact students' motivation and participation, what beliefs, knowledge, and reasoning do teachers hold regarding the use of these strategies, and how exactly are they implemented in the EFL classroom? This personal observation, combined with the gap identified in the existing literature, underscores the need to examine both the implementation and the teacher's perspective on the use of praise and punishment strategies in managing young learners' motivation in EFL settings.

Based on previous studies, such as Kusumawati et al. (2023), Putri et al. (2023), and Yolanda (2023), most research has focused on students' responses and the effects of praise and punishment, while limited attention has been given to teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and professional reasoning regarding the use of these strategies in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, few studies have examined how these strategies are actually implemented in real classroom settings, particularly in the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). Therefore, this study aims to examine both how an English teacher implements praise and punishment strategies in the EFL classroom and how the teacher perceives the use of these strategies in supporting students' motivation, participation, interaction, and use of English. When applied appropriately, these strategies are expected to contribute to a more engaging and communicative learning environment for young learners.

B. Research Questions

Based on the above discussion, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does an English teacher implement praise and punishment strategies in teaching young English learners?
2. What is an English teacher's perspective on the use of praise and punishment strategies in managing the motivation of young English learners?

C. Research Purposes

In line with the research questions, the purposes of this study are formulated as follows:

1. To describe an English teacher's implementation of praise and punishment strategies in teaching young English learners.
2. To identify an English teacher's perspective on the use of praise and punishment strategies in managing the motivation of young English learners.

D. Research Significances

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) particularly Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) by providing insights into teachers' perspectives of praise and punishment strategies in EFL classrooms. Previous studies have mainly concentrated on students' responses and learning outcomes, while this study focuses on teachers' beliefs, perceptions and professional reasoning in the application of these strategies. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing literature by providing insight into the pedagogical considerations that influence teachers' decisions about instruction and classroom management.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to assist English teachers, particularly those teaching young learners, in applying praise and punishment strategies more effectively and thoughtfully. The results may encourage teachers to reflect on their classroom practices and consider students' motivational and emotional needs when using external reinforcement. In addition, this study may provide insights for schools and teacher educators regarding the role of motivational strategies in classroom management and student engagement. Furthermore, the findings may serve as a reference for future researchers interested in teacher perspectives, classroom management, motivation, and EFL teaching practices.

E. Research Scope

This study focused on exploring an English teacher's perspective and classroom practices regarding the use of praise and punishment strategies in managing students' motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, particularly in the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). In this study, praise and punishment were regarded not merely as instruments for regulating students' behavior, but also as pedagogical strategies

that can enhance students' engagement in language learning, encompassing their participation, interaction, and utilization of English during classroom activities (Syarifuddin & Zulfah, 2020).

The research was conducted at a junior high school in Ciamis, Indonesia, involving one English teacher who teaches Grade VII students. The selection of Grade VII was based on the consideration that students at this level are still categorized as young learners who require external motivational support and structured classroom management to actively participate and interact in English learning (Soraya et al., 2022).

The scope of this study focused on the teacher's perspective, beliefs, professional knowledge, attitudes, and professional reasoning regarding the use of praise and punishment strategies to manage classroom behavior and support young learners' motivation in EFL learning. In this study, the term perspective is used rather than perception, as perspective refers to a broader and more comprehensive cognitive construct that encompasses the teacher's overall professional worldview, values, and accumulated understanding, which consistently shapes how strategies are interpreted and implemented in the classroom (Humaeroah et al., 2023). Perception, by contrast, refers to a more immediate and surface-level awareness of specific events or stimuli in a given moment (Merriam, 2022). Therefore, examining the teacher's perspective allows for a deeper understanding of the underlying professional framework that informs the consistent use of praise and punishment strategies, rather than simply capturing how the teacher responds to isolated classroom situations.

This study was limited to one English teacher and a specific EFL classroom context. It did not aim to measure students' academic achievement quantitatively or compare the effectiveness of different motivational strategies. Furthermore, the findings were not intended to be generalized to other schools or educational settings; rather, they provide a contextualized understanding of the teacher's perspective and classroom practices regarding the use of praise and punishment strategies in a TEYL setting.

F. Theoretical Framework

This study is conceptually grounded in four interrelated theoretical foundations: Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), classroom management theory, praise and punishment theory, and student motivation theory. These theories function as complementary lenses to explain how English teachers manage classroom behavior and support young learners' motivation in EFL classroom contexts.

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) emphasizes that young learners have distinct cognitive, emotional, and behavioral characteristics. Early secondary students, especially those in Grade VII, are still learning self-regulation techniques and frequently depend on teachers' external direction, structure, and support (Pinter, 2017). In order to support young learners' engagement and learning, effective classroom management and suitable motivational techniques are crucial.

Classroom management refers to teachers' efforts to organize the classroom environment, establish rules, maintain discipline, and create a supportive atmosphere that enables effective teaching and learning. In EFL classrooms, effective classroom management is essential to ensure that instructional activities run smoothly and that students remain engaged in the learning process (Syarifuddin & Zulfah, 2020). It provides the structural foundation within which various instructional strategies can be implemented to support students' participation and learning development.

Praise and punishment are based on behaviorism theory, used to influence behavior and encourage improvement. Praise is given as appreciation for good performance and desirable actions, aiming to increase motivation and encourage individuals to repeat positive behavior. Punishment, on the other hand, serves as a corrective measure meant to control behavior, enforce regulations, and stop inappropriate behavior from happening again (Anggoro et al., 2023). In educational settings, praise supports students' positive engagement, while punishment serves as a strategy to guide students toward more responsible behavior.

Student motivation theory explains how instructional strategies influence learners' engagement in English learning. This study is based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which conceptualizes motivation that extends from intrinsic motivation such as engaging in an activity out of genuine interest and enjoyment, to extrinsic motivation such as engaging in an activity due to external outcomes such as rewards, evaluations, or consequences (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Conceptually, TEYL provides the developmental understanding that young learners possess unique cognitive, emotional, and behavioral characteristics and require structured guidance from teachers. Classroom management theory offers the organizational and environmental framework necessary to maintain order and support effective learning in EFL classrooms. Within this framework, praise and punishment function as behavioral regulation strategies used to reinforce desirable actions and correct inappropriate behavior. Finally, student motivation theory, particularly Self-Determination Theory (SDT), explains how these strategies may influence learners' extrinsic motivation. Together, these interconnected theories construct the conceptual framework that guides this study in examining teachers' perceptions and implementation of praise and punishment strategies in motivating young English learners.

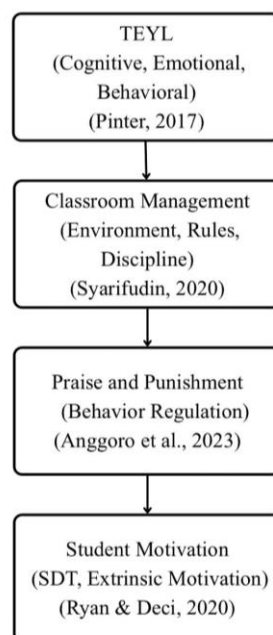


Figure 1. 1 Conceptual Framework

Based on this conceptual framework, the study explores how English teachers comprehend and apply strategies of praise and punishment in their classroom management practices, especially when teaching young learners. The framework positions TEYL as the developmental foundation, classroom management as the structural environment, praise and punishment as behavioral regulation strategies, and student motivation viewed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the motivational outcome influenced by these practices.

G. Previous Studies

Several previous studies have examined the use of praise and punishment strategies in relation to young learners' motivation in English language learning; however, most of them concentrated on students' outcomes and responses rather than on how teachers perceive and implement these strategies in actual classroom practice, which is the central focus of the present study.

Kusumawati et al. (2023) investigated elementary school students in Indonesia using observation and interviews. The study found that rewards such as praise, additional points, and small gifts significantly enhanced students' extrinsic motivation and reinforced positive behavior, while appropriate punishment helped reduce repeated misbehavior. Although this study touched on classroom practice through observation, it examined praise and punishment strategies primarily as variables affecting students' learning outcomes, rather than exploring the teacher's perspective, beliefs, or professional reasoning behind their classroom implementation.

Another study investigated Grade 11 secondary school students in a public school on the outskirts of Bangkok, Thailand. The findings revealed that the implementation of praise positively influenced students' emotions, motivation, classroom participation, and personal growth, as students demonstrated greater enthusiasm, satisfaction, and active engagement in learning activities. Nevertheless, this study approached classroom implementation solely from the

students' point of view, without investigating the teacher's beliefs, attitudes, or decision-making processes in applying these strategies, both of which are central concerns of the present study (Phungphai & Boonmoh, 2021).

Another study investigated primary school students in Indonesia using a quantitative survey method. The findings showed that positive reinforcement including praise significantly enhanced students' motivation, whereas punishment tended to reduce students' engagement. However, this study measured the statistical relationship between reinforcement strategies and motivational outcomes without examining how or why teachers chose to implement praise and punishment strategies in the classroom, leaving the teacher's perspective largely unexplored (Mahendra, 2024).

Yolanda (2023) investigated junior high school students at SMP Negeri 32 Pekanbaru, Indonesia. The findings showed that students responded positively to praise, experiencing happiness, motivation, and a sense of appreciation, whereas reactions to punishment were mixed, including both positive effects such as enhanced discipline and adverse emotions such as disappointment. Although conducted at the junior high school level, similar to the context of the present study, this research examined students' responses to praise and punishment rather than the teacher's professional reasoning in selecting and applying these strategies in classroom practice.

Another relevant study examined students in Grades 5 to 12 in public schools in Delaware, United States. The findings indicated that greater use of punishment including punitive consequences was associated with higher extrinsic motivation but lower intrinsic motivation, whereas the use of praise and rewards was associated with higher extrinsic motivation without diminishing intrinsic motivation. However, this study focused exclusively on the motivational effects of praise and punishment as experienced by students, without addressing how teachers perceive, reason about, or implement these strategies within actual classroom practice (Bear et al., 2017).

Based on the review of previous studies, it can be concluded that most existing research on praise and punishment in English language learning primarily

emphasizes student outcomes or the types of rewards and punishment used. While these studies demonstrate the effects of praise and punishment on students' motivation and behavior, limited attention has been given to teachers' professional beliefs, perceptions, and reasons for applying these strategies. Therefore, a clear research gap remains in exploring teachers' perspective and the actual implementation of praise and punishment strategies within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. To address this gap, the present study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate how an English teacher at SMPN 1 Panjalu perceives and implements praise and punishment strategies in managing the motivation of seventh-grade students.

