

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter gives a brief explanation of the study. It consists of the background of the study, the questions and purposes of this research, the research significance, the conceptual framework, and previous studies related to this research.

#### **A. Background**

The current study aims to investigate English teachers' implicit grammar teaching strategies for young learners, particularly in designing and implementing implicit grammar teaching activities, as well as the challenges and benefits. Moreover, this investigation is significant as it provides insights into the nuanced approaches that teachers adopt to facilitate the acquisition of grammatical structures without explicit instruction (Guci & Drajadi, 2019). These strategies, often overlooked in traditional language teaching methodologies, hold the potential to significantly enhance young learners' intuitive grasp of English grammar in a natural and engaging learning environment (Setyaningsih, 2019). The investigation into these methods is particularly timely, as the field of language education increasingly recognizes the importance of implicit learning mechanisms in the cognitive development of young learners (Guci et al., 2021).

Implicit instruction is often considered more suitable and effective for young learners, who have a more limited cognitive capacity and who prefer learning through meaningful and enjoyable activities rather than through explicit rules and drills (Ibrahim, 2016). Young learners typically have a more natural facility for language acquisition and may benefit more from implicit instruction, which allows them to absorb grammar rules through exposure and practice within meaningful communication (Alenezi, 2019). Therefore, the students will learn grammar without noticing that they are learning grammar as they focus more on acquiring the language exposed to them (Krashen, 1982). This type of learning is different from explicit grammar instruction, which involves the direct and systematic teaching of grammatical rules and forms.

Explicit grammar instruction adopts a more direct approach, emphasizing grammar rules and structures through explanations and providing learners with a conscious understanding of grammatical principles (Rosmiaty et al., 2023). Young learners may not benefit from explicit grammar instruction since it is theory-based and focuses on the form rather than the meaning and context, which may not help young learners develop their communicative competence (Crystal, 2018). Explicit grammar instruction has some drawbacks, such as slowing down the natural acquisition and fluency of the language, making some learners lose interest and motivation, and not working well for young learners who have less cognitive ability and who like to learn through fun and meaningful activities (Ibrahim, 2016; Alenezi, 2019). As a result, using this type of instruction for young learners may not be effective and enjoyable, unless they are combined with other methods that promote communication and motivation.

One possible solution is to use implicit grammar teaching strategies. According to Pawlak (2021), implicit grammar teaching is a method that aims to help students learn grammar rules through exposure and communication in natural situations rather than through explicit explanation or correction. Implicit grammar teaching can foster learners to discover grammar rules for themselves and apply them to their communication (Ling, 2015). Young learners can benefit from implicit grammar teaching because it can make them more interested and motivated to learn grammar. It can also help them learn grammar rules better by letting them figure out the rules independently (Guci & Drajadi, 2019). In addition, implicit grammar teaching was more effective than explicit grammar teaching in improving grammar skills (Soleimani et al., 2015).

However, the benefits of implicit grammar teaching are accompanied by some challenges that are faced by teachers in their classrooms. One challenge of implicit grammar teaching is that creating fun and engaging activities for students can be difficult. Kuswanty (2023) found that many implicit grammar activities are not engaging for students, which can lead to them losing interest in the lesson. Teaching English to young learners is challenging for teachers (Anggraini, 2018), as they must create a fun and engaging learning environment that does not bore or

intimidate their students with formal grammar rules. Implicit grammar teaching also can be challenging for teachers who are unfamiliar with the method. Teachers often need additional training to create practical implicit grammar activities (Guci et al., 2021)

Based on the preliminary observations at a primary school in Bandung, it is revealed that teachers face some challenges to teach English grammar implicitly in young learners' classrooms. These challenges stem from the need to create a learning environment that is both engaging and conducive to the natural acquisition of language, as highlighted by Pinter (2017). Teachers must navigate the complexities of young learners' attention spans, which are limited and require a variety of activities, games, and visual aids to maintain engagement (Pinter, 2017). Additionally, they must address varied levels of literacy, ranging from non-readers to proficient readers and writers in their first language (Cameron, 2001).

The strategies in conveying grammatical concepts without explicit instruction are also challenging. Young learners may benefit more from an implicit approach that embeds grammatical structures within meaningful contexts and activities. For instance, in the first grade, the introduction of articles 'a' and 'an' is integrated into simple sentences like "I have a book," which allows students to grasp the concept in a practical context and meaningful sentence. However, some students may not be able to read at all, while others may have a basic grasp of letters and words. This diversity requires teachers to divide their attention and tailor their instruction to meet the needs of each student, providing multiple entry points and differentiated instruction (Shin, 2013).

Several studies have previously been carried out on this topic. First, a study by Latifah (2023) examined teachers' strategies for teaching grammar to young learners, finding that an inductive, implicit approach was preferred by most teachers to engage students in discovering grammar rules themselves. Second, the research conducted by Guci et al. (2021) investigated the implementation of implicit grammar teaching using focus on form and focus on forms, revealing positive impacts on students' grammar acquisition. Third, a study by Khusenova (2023) compared explicit and implicit grammar instruction, suggesting that while implicit

strategies are beneficial for very young learners, explicit instruction complements implicit knowledge as children age.

Nevertheless, the current research stands apart from earlier studies in various aspects. The research explores implicit grammar teaching strategies applied by English teachers in young learners' classrooms. It focuses on the teachers' practices regarding implicit grammar teaching and the challenges and benefits they encounter. The research also examines how the teachers design and implement implicit grammar teaching activities for young learners in the classrooms. It is limited to a small number of EYL teachers who teach at a primary school in Bandung and have experience using implicit grammar teaching methods.

## **B. Research Questions**

A set of research questions has been formed from the issues mentioned earlier. Two questions are being addressed in this study:

1. How does the EYL teacher design implicit grammar teaching activities for young learners?
2. How does the EYL teacher implement implicit grammar teaching activities for young learners?

## **C. Research Purposes**

The objectives of this study are derived from the research questions above. The aims of this study are:

1. To explore the strategies employed by the EYL teacher in designing implicit grammar teaching activities for young learners.
2. To explore the implementation of implicit grammar teaching activities by the EYL teacher for young learners.

## **D. Research Significances**

The study is expected to provide theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the result of the study may contribute to the existing literature on implicit grammar teaching and young learners, by exploring the teachers' experiences in implementing this approach. The practical significance of the study is specific for teachers. The result of the study can help them to learn from the

experiences and strategies of other teachers who use implicit grammar teaching for young learners. Furthermore, it can support teachers in developing and implementing implicit grammar teaching activities that are suitable for their students' needs, interests, and abilities. By gaining insights into the narratives and reflections of experienced teachers, the study can provide valuable guidance for teachers seeking to integrate implicit grammar instruction for young language learners effectively.

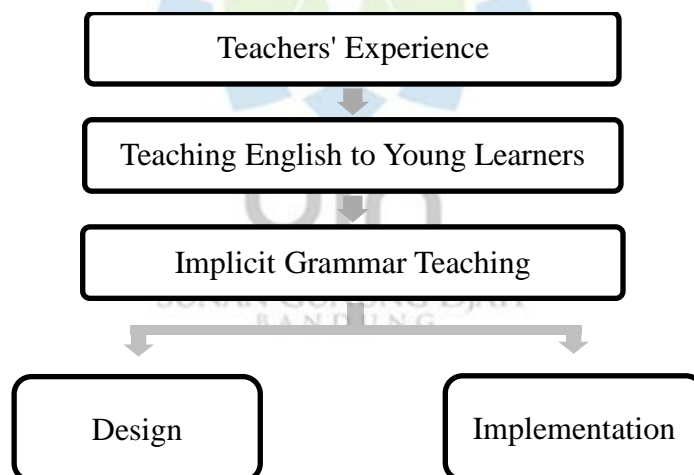
### **E. Conceptual Framework**

Teaching English to young learners requires specialized strategies and approaches to cater to their unique developmental needs and learning styles. English for young learners involves designing and implementing lessons that are appropriate for the developmental stages, cognitive abilities, interests, and needs of young learners (Sukarno, 2008). As Pinter (2017) defines, young learners are a distinct group of language learners with their own specific characteristics, needs, and wants. Effective teaching strategies for young learners often involve incorporating elements of play, storytelling, and multisensory activities to capture their attention and facilitate language acquisition (Cameron, 2001). Furthermore, Shin and Crandall (2014) highlight the importance of creating a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters confidence and encourages active participation among young learners. Moreover, implicit grammar teaching strategies have gained traction as an effective approach for teaching grammar to young learners.

Implicit grammar teaching, also known as the inductive approach, has gained significant recognition in language education. According to Larsen-Freeman (2015), implicit grammar teaching involves providing learners with opportunities to experience grammatical structures in context, without explicit explanations of the underlying rules. This approach aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching, where learners are encouraged to infer grammatical patterns through exposure to meaningful language input (Ellis, 2006). Implicit grammar teaching has been shown to promote naturalistic language acquisition and enhance learners' communicative competence (Krashen, 1982; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Contrasted with implicit grammar instruction is explicit grammar instruction,

which entails articulating or clarifying the grammatical rules in plain language (Pawlak, 2021).

Explicit instruction serves as a direct approach where rules are not absorbed through exposure but are systematically taught, ensuring that learners are aware of the grammatical structures (Norris & Ortega, 2000). Meanwhile, implicit instruction allows learners to develop a natural feel for the language as they engage with it in meaningful communication (Ellis, 2005). This method relies on the premise that language acquisition occurs most effectively when students are not consciously focused on the rules, but rather on using the language authentically (Krashen, 1982). Implicit grammar teaching aims to expose students to substantial doses of grammar study without alienating them from learning English or other foreign languages (Lynch, 2022). However, the successful implementation of implicit grammar teaching strategies often relies on the experience and expertise of the teachers.



**Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework**

Experienced teachers possess a wealth of knowledge and skills that contribute significantly to the teaching and learning process. Their years of practice have equipped them with a deep understanding of various pedagogical approaches, classroom management strategies, and the ability to adapt to diverse learners' needs (Richards & Farrell, 2005). As Tsui (2003) emphasizes, teachers' experience is a critical factor in shaping their instructional decisions and practices. Experienced

teachers have developed a repertoire of techniques and strategies that they can draw upon to create engaging and effective learning environments. In addition, narrative inquiry is a powerful research approach that allows teachers to share their lived experiences, reflections, and pedagogical strategies through storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). By exploring teachers' narratives, researchers can gain deep insights into the complexities and nuances of classroom practices, as well as the underlying rationales and beliefs that inform their teaching strategies.

#### **F. Previous Studies**

The topic of the current research has been the subject of several earlier studies. The first is Latifah (2023) who explores the strategies employed by teachers in teaching grammar to young learners. The research utilizes interviews and classroom observations to gather data from three different elementary schools. The study finds that two out of three teachers prefer an inductive approach, engaging students in activities to discover grammar rules themselves. In contrast, one teacher opts for a deductive approach, providing direct grammar exercises. The research suggests that an inductive approach may enhance language acquisition and encourages teachers to monitor learners' progress to ensure timely achievement of learning objectives. In comparison, the current research focuses on implicit strategies without direct rule teaching, which is related to inductive approach.

Second, Guci et al. (2021) investigated the implementation of an implicit grammar teaching strategy using “the focus on form and focus on forms” in a senior high school. The study used a case study design and involved one English teacher and 30 students. The data were collected through interviews, observations, and tests. The results indicated that the teacher had positive views on implicit grammar teaching strategy and used both focus on form and focus on forms in delivering the lesson materials. The study also found that implicit grammar teaching strategies positively impacted the students' grammar acquisition. To differ with the current study, a narrative inquiry is used to obtain the data to provide insights into the personal and professional development of teachers who design and implement implicit grammar teaching activities for young learners.

Third, Khusenova (2023) examines the impact of explicit grammar instruction on young English language learners. It suggests that while explicit grammar teaching is less crucial for very young learners, it becomes more beneficial as children age, particularly between 8 to 12 years old. The research employs an inductive method, advocating for a natural approach to language learning through contextual learning and interactive activities, and finds that explicit instruction complements implicit knowledge gained at younger ages. Comparing this with the current research, which emphasizes the effectiveness of implicit teaching strategies. Furthermore, it focuses on narrative inquiry to understand teachers' experiences and expectations, suggesting that implicit strategies are preferred for natural language acquisition.

Fourth, Cortez and Genisan (2021) examines various approaches to grammar instruction for young learners, focusing on deductive, inductive, and eclectic methods. The study utilizes a scoping review methodology, analyzing recent literature to determine the most suitable approach. The findings suggest that while the inductive approach allows students to set rules before practice, the deductive approach is time-efficient and deemed best for young learners due to their need for guidance. Meanwhile, the current research emphasizes personal experiences and expectations in teaching English implicitly, which focuses on language acquisition through exposure and experience, indicating a need for further research to explore optimal teaching strategies for grammar acquisition in young learners.