

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the background, rationale, problem formulation, research objectives, significance and limitation of this research. This chapter introduces phenomena related to the teaching strategy preferences by English Teacher.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Merdeka Curriculum is an effort by the government to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. The process of the Merdeka Curriculum began with the replacement of the 2013 Curriculum to the emergency curriculum, which was designed as a step to simplify and adapt learning to fast-changing conditions, especially due to the pandemic.

Along with the improving world conditions, the Indonesian government launched the Merdeka Curriculum which emphasizes the importance of 21st century skills: Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creativity, and Communication (Alghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2021). As traditional education methods are disrupted, it is increasingly clear that these skills are indispensable to equip students to effectively face future challenges. Critical thinking helps students analyze information, solve problems, and make informed decisions in an increasingly complex world. Collaboration encourages teamwork and interpersonal skills, which are essential in diverse work environments, where success often depends on collective effort. Creativity encourages students to think outside the box and develop innovative solutions, a quality that is increasingly valued in today's fast-changing job

market. Meanwhile, effective communication skills are required to express ideas clearly and interact with others in a variety of contexts. Taken together, these competencies not only enhance academic performance, but also align with the demands of an ever-evolving global workforce, where adaptability and interpersonal skills are essential (Zhou, 2023). When teachers focus on integrating these skills into their teaching practices, they prepare students not only to achieve academic success, but also to participate meaningfully in an ever-changing world.

With the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the teaching paradigm also needs to change (Salma & Yuli, 2023). Learning is expected to incorporate project or problem-based approaches, which encourage students to engage in real-world projects, while honing critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication skills. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of teaching methods, adapt learning to suit students' diverse abilities and create a more inclusive learning environment. The curriculum also emphasizes character development, with the aim of instilling moral values in addition to academic skills.

These changes also affected English Education, where the development began with teaching strategies and methods grouped by Larsen Freeman & Anderson's (2013) consisting of Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Direct Method, Audio Lingual Method, Silent Way Method, Desuggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response, Content-based Instruction, Task-based Language Teaching. Then it develops where new

methods and strategies were introduced to help teachers cope with the teaching demands of the Merdeka Curriculum (Anisah & Qamariah, 2023).

According to Hosaini et al. (2022) in the book *Learning Methods and Models for Merdeka Curriculum*, new strategies are also contained in Merdeka Curriculum which was created by adjusting to new principles, where strategic innovations are made with the aim that students can actively participate with full support from the teacher. Some of these strategies are Differentiated Learning, Integrated Learning, Flipped Classroom, Competency Based Learning, and Active Learning.

The emergence of new strategies has challenged teachers to adapt to students' needs. The strategies chosen by teachers become key elements that influence the success of the learning process, to ensure students' academic engagement and create a comfortable learning environment (Savitri et al. 2022). The selection of appropriate teaching strategies in EFL learning can have a significant impact on students' comprehension and learning achievement. The choice of teaching strategies implemented in the classroom is usually based on teacher preference.

Many factors influence preferences for teaching strategies in the classroom, such as student conditions during the learning process, the teacher's ability to teach, and facilities that support the learning process (Mustika, 2021). One other important factor is gender. Gender plays an important role because it can influence teachers' teaching strategy preferences (Song et al. 2022).

Eckert and McConnell's (2013) research explains that different linguistic behaviors between male and female show significant differences in their communication styles in various contexts. In the study, it was found that female tend to engage in conversation more often and prioritize social interaction. In contrast, male were more focused on specific activities and tended to show dominance in non-intimate situations. These findings can be applied in the context of the study, where male teachers tend to exhibit more dominant behaviors, engage less in conversation, and prefer student-centered teaching strategies. Student-centered strategies place students as the main focus in the learning process, while the teacher acts as a facilitator who assists and supports the process. On the other hand, female teachers tend to be more active in speaking, which is in line with the teacher-centered teaching strategy. In this strategy, the teacher plays an important role in delivering the material and controlling the interaction and dynamics in the classroom. This is also stated by Artini (2006), that female teachers tend to use more diverse teaching strategies in teaching English than male teachers, this means that female teachers tend to use more diverse teaching strategies in teaching English compared to male teachers, who may be more focussed on a few specific methods. This suggests that there are differences in teaching approaches based on gender, which may affect the way materials are delivered and interactions with students.

Gender differences highlighted the significant influence of gender on teaching strategy preferences among teachers, which revealed how these differences can shape classroom interactions and learning environments. As

mentioned by Afzal et al. (2023), there are gender variations in the awareness and application of teaching methods. Therefore, it is important to understand how gender influences the approaches and strategies used by teachers. Understanding these gendered teaching preferences can provide valuable insights for developing more inclusive and responsive methods and assist in designing more effective teacher training programs. This is also explained by Sánchez-Cabrero et al. (2023) that understanding of gender in education is very important because it can improve a more inclusive, equitable and empowering learning environment. By identifying areas where teaching approaches can be adjusted, schools can improve student learning outcomes. In addition, by understanding these preferences, educational institutions can formulate policies that support diversity in teaching strategies, creating a more adaptive and inclusive learning environment.

However, comprehensive research on the changes in teachers' teaching strategy preferences after its implementation is still rare. This is a major concern for researcher who want to explore how teachers in Indonesia evolve their teaching strategies to meet the demands of the modern environment, particularly in English language teaching. The lack of in-depth research in this area opens up great opportunities for further research, to fill the gaps in the literature and provide a deeper understanding of how teachers face challenges and opportunities in education in the post-pandemic and 21st century era.

This study was conducted at SMPN 2 Singaraja based on the need to find out whether male and female teachers at SMPN 2 Singaraja have different preferences in the selection of teaching strategies, especially after the

implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and to find out what these preferences are and whether they are in line with existing theories regarding gender differences in the teaching and learning process. Given the importance of teaching strategies in shaping students' experiences, a deeper understanding of this research could make an important contribution to the development of more effective education.

1.2 PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

During and after the pandemic, research on teaching strategies has developed rapidly, especially in regards to teachers adapting to distance learning and digital technology. However, the focus of education has changed to prepare for the demands of the 21st century following the Merdeka Curriculum regulation, such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and digital literacy. These changes certainly affect the teaching strategies chosen by teachers. However, especially after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, research on gender differences in English teaching strategies in Buleleng is still limited. Male and female teachers may adopt different strategies, both in the use of technology and in adapting teaching methods to meet 21st century needs. This creates a knowledge gap where specific information on gender affects teachers' preferences in selecting and implementing modern teaching strategies.

In addition, the existing literature focuses more on the general differences between traditional and modern teaching strategies without any consideration of how gender differences may affect decision-making in this context. This results in a lack of understanding of the differences in teaching preferences

between male and female teachers, which may impact on the effectiveness of implementing teaching strategies in the classroom. This limitation hinders the ability to develop more targeted recommendations and support teachers in developing teaching methods that suit their gender characteristics and needs.

1.3 LIMITATIONS

The data collection stage of this research were conducted in a junior high school in Buleleng Regency. The junior high school chosen as the research setting has male and female English teachers and implements the Merdeka Curriculum which use modern teaching strategies. The location chosen for data collection is SMPN 2 Singaraja. The participants of this study were two male and two female English teachers at SMPN 2 Singaraja. This research uses a small number of subjects, so the data results cannot be used to describe the situation in other locations outside the research setting.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM

From those explanation, the research questions can be concluded as follows:

1. How are the teaching strategies used by the English male teacher in SMPN 2 Singaraja?
2. How are the teaching strategies used by the English female teacher in SMPN 2 Singaraja?
3. How do the teaching strategies used by English male and female teachers differ in SMPN 2 Singaraja?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aims of this research are as follows,

1. To describe the teaching strategy preferences of male English teachers in SMPN 2 Singaraja
2. To describe the teaching strategy preferences of female English teachers in SMPN 2 Singaraja
3. To describe the differences of English teacher's teaching strategy preferences in SMPN 2 Singaraja

1.6 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This study was gave some significance that can be divided into two parts, including:

1. Theoretical Significance

Understanding teaching strategy preferences of male and female teacher that may have a contribution to the quality of teaching and learning process in EFL class.

2. Practical Significance

1. For Teacher

With this research, it is hoped that it can contribute to the process of becoming a better English teacher, especially in selecting effective teaching strategies for students.

2. For Further Researcher

This research is hoped to be an empirical evidence for further research in relation to gender differences in teaching English strategy choice and its effect on student's learning.

3. For English Language Education Department

This study aims to provide an understanding of teaching strategies for prospective English teachers in the English Language Education Department, so that the teaching learning process can be developed to be more effective.

