

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

An overview of the research conducted, establishing the research rationale, objectives, questions, significance, and limitations of the research are discussed in this chapter. This chapter is an introductory chapter related to the stage for a comprehensive exploration of male and female teachers' preferences in English language teaching strategies.

### 1.1 Research Background

In today's educational landscape, English language proficiency has become a crucial aspect in supporting the academic and career advancement of students worldwide. This is because English is an international language used to communicate with others worldwide and holds the status of a Lingua Franca. In recognition of this status, the Indonesian government has delegated English language education to all levels of education, starting with high school (Kurniati et al., 2021). This aims to equip students with the skills needed to interact effectively with individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, mastering English will undoubtedly enhance students' learning process in acquiring a broader range of foreign languages, focusing on developing comprehensive communication skills. By integrating English language education into the curriculum, Indonesian students can foster greater global connectivity and enhance their ability to navigate multilingual environments seamlessly (Isadaud et al., 2022).

English language education in Indonesia is undergoing a transformation, as evidenced by significant changes to the national curriculum, particularly the 2004 and 2013 Curriculums. This significant change was marked by the introduction of the 2004 Curriculum, also known as the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK), which formally integrated English as a regional language. Local content subjects at the elementary level reflect the increasing importance of these subjects (Kurniati et al., 2021). The aim of this curriculum was to improve students' communication skills and foster an appreciation for cultural diversity. In subsequent years, the 2013 Curriculum introduced a more holistic educational approach, emphasizing character development alongside academic achievement (Kaimuddin, 2014). This curriculum not only strengthened English language instruction but also aimed to develop students' critical thinking skills and creativity. Both

curricula highlight the Indonesian government's ongoing commitment to improving educational outcomes and preparing students to become global citizens.

In addition to this transformation, the implementation of the curriculum in Indonesian education underwent significant changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all levels of education were suspended, and both teachers and students had to adapt to distance learning. This sudden change in the learning system unwittingly brought with it the use of technology in the learning process (Kumaran & Peria Karuppan, 2022). The transition students and teachers had to go through to distance learning was not easy. Many teachers were required to quickly learn new digital tools and methods, and there were often cases where teachers used these media without adequate training. Students also faced challenges, especially those from low-income families who lacked access to the necessary technology or reliable internet (Gocotano et al., 2021). This also highlighted the existing gaps in Indonesian education.

However, the government has been able to effectively address the disparities in the education sector. As global conditions improved, the Indonesian government launched the Merdeka Curriculum, which highlights the importance of 21st-century skills: Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creativity, and Communication (Alghamdi & Al-Ghamdi, 2021). In this situation, the traditional educational paradigm is being disrupted, as these skills are proven to be crucial for equipping students to effectively face future challenges (Ramamonjisoa, 2024). Critical thinking enables students to analyze information, solve problems, and make informed decisions in an increasingly complex world. Collaboration fosters teamwork and interpersonal skills, which are essential in a diverse work environment where collective effort drives success. Creativity encourages students to think outside the box and develop innovative solutions—qualities increasingly valued in today's fast-paced job market. Meanwhile, effective communication skills are necessary to convey ideas clearly and interact with others in a variety of contexts. Overall, these competencies not only enhance academic performance but also align with the evolving demands of the global workplace, which prioritizes adaptability and interpersonal skills (Zhou, 2023). When educators focus on integrating these skills into their teaching practices, they prepare students not only for academic success but also for meaningful participation in a rapidly changing world.

As previously mentioned, the Merdeka Curriculum was introduced by the Indonesian government in response to educational disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Putri et al., 2023). The curriculum aims to provide a more flexible and student-centered

learning experience. It allows educators to adapt their teaching strategies based on individual student needs and local contexts (Fitriyah & Wardani, 2022). The emphasis on essential learning materials, ensuring students have sufficient time to develop core competencies such as literacy and numeracy, and thus helping prevent a loss of focus on learning, are key characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum (Rizky, 2022).

Along with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the teaching and learning paradigms also need to change (Salma & Yuli, 2023). Learning is required to incorporate project-based or problem-based learning, which encourages students to engage in real-world projects that foster critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills. Teachers are empowered to apply various teaching methods, adapt learning to suit diverse student abilities, and create a more inclusive learning environment. The curriculum also emphasizes character development, aiming to foster moral values alongside academic skills.

This has also impacted the field of English Language Education. Many new teaching methods and strategies have been created and introduced to help teachers meet the demands of teaching within a Merdeka Curriculum (Anisah & Qamariah, 2023). Some of these include Learning Strategy Training, Cooperative Learning, Computer-Assisted Language Learning, Project-Based Learning, Blended Learning, Discovery Learning, Picture and Imagery, Non-Example, Contextual Teaching and Learning, and Problem-Based Learning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). The emergence of new curricula and strategies has created challenges for teachers to adapt to students' needs.

The strategies implemented by teachers are a crucial element influencing the success of the learning process, ensuring academic engagement and a comfortable learning environment (Savitri et al., 2022). Therefore, selecting appropriate teaching strategies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms is crucial. Appropriate teaching strategies significantly impact student learning and achievement. The choice of teaching strategies implemented in the classroom is based on each teacher's individual preferences.

Many factors can influence the preferred teaching strategies used in the classroom, such as student conditions during the learning process, teacher ability, and facilities supporting the learning process (Mustika & Wardah, 2021). Furthermore, Constructivist theory found that students learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process (Piaget, 1976). Therefore, the teaching strategies chosen by teachers always enable students to actively participate in the classroom, such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, group discussions, and the use of technology in learning. Research conducted by

Brown (2007) also emphasized the importance of using a variety of methods to meet the diverse needs of students.

However, comprehensive research on shifts in teachers' teaching strategy preferences following the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum remains elusive. This is of particular interest to researchers exploring how teachers in Indonesia, particularly in Buleleng Regency, adapt their teaching approaches to meet the demands of the modern environment, particularly in English language teaching. The lack of in-depth studies in this area opens up significant opportunities for further research, filling gaps in the literature and providing richer insights into how teachers navigate the challenges and opportunities of post-pandemic and 21st-century education.

This research was conducted at SMAN 1 Tejakula, motivated by the need to determine whether male and female teachers at SMAN 1 Tejakula have different teaching strategy preferences, especially after the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, and to determine what preferences are shown during the teaching and learning process carried out by each teacher. This research was conducted by considering the importance of teaching strategies in shaping students' learning experiences, where a deeper understanding of this can make an important contribution to the development of more effective and inclusive education, especially in Buleleng, Bali.

By examining English teachers' teaching strategy preferences, this study can reveal the strategies used by both male and female English teachers, which in turn can be used to improve classroom teaching practices. Furthermore, this study can identify and capitalize on the unique strengths of each preference that emerges in teaching, thereby creating a more balanced and productive learning environment. This study can also contribute to the broader literature in education, specifically on English teachers' teaching strategy preferences, which is still a developing area of research and requires more empirical evidence. Furthermore, if it is found that teaching strategy preferences differ significantly across teachers, this can be used to develop training programs tailored to each teacher's unique needs and strengths. This study can also provide a foundation for developing a more effective curriculum that not only improves student learning outcomes but also supports teachers' professional development. Overall, this study aims to improve the quality of English language learning by ensuring that teaching strategies used in the post-COVID-19 pandemic are effective and appropriate to students' characteristics and needs, and the effectiveness of classroom learning.



## **1.2 Problem Identification**

Research on teaching strategies has developed rapidly during and after the pandemic, especially regarding teachers' adaptations to distance learning and digital technologies. However, after the regulation of The Merdeka Curriculum, the focus of education has changed to prepare for the demands of the 21st century, such as critical thinking skills, collaboration, creativity and digital literacy. These changes surely affected the teaching strategies chosen by teachers. However, research on gender differences in English language teaching strategies, especially after the Merdeka Curriculum implementation in Buleleng, is 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, existing literature often focuses on general differences between traditional and modern teaching approaches without considering how gender differences may influence decision-making in these contexts. This results in a lack of understanding of potential differences in teaching preferences between male and female teachers, which may impact the effectiveness of implementing teaching strategies in the classroom. This limitation hinders the ability to develop more targeted recommendations and support educators in developing teaching methods that suit their gendered characteristics and needs.

## **1.3 Limitation**

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, limited access to literature specifically discussing modern teaching strategy preferences post-Covid-19 pandemic reduces this study's ability to develop a strong theoretical framework. The lack of adequate data on how English teachers choose their teaching strategies limits the analysis and may not fully reflect the reality in the field. Additionally, this study only used a small number of subjects, namely English teachers at SMAN 1 Tejakula, Buleleng Regency, Bali Province, so the results may not be generalizable to a broader context. Finally, other factors that may influence teaching strategy preferences, such as teaching experience, cultural background, and resource availability, were not discussed in depth in this study, which may affect the validity of the conclusions obtained. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results, and future research should address these issues to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

## 1.4 Research Questions

The problem formulation of this research is as follows:

1. What are the teaching strategy preferences of male English teachers at SMAN 1 Tejakula?
2. What are the teaching strategy preferences of female English teachers at SMAN 1 Tejakula?
3. How do the teaching strategies used by male and female English teachers at SMAN 1 Tejakula differ?

## 1.5 Research Objectives

Departing from the research question above, the objectives of conducting this research are follows:

1. To describe the teaching strategy preferences of male English teachers at SMAN 1 Tejakula.
2. To describe the teaching strategy preferences of female English teachers at SMAN 1 Tejakula.
3. To describe the differences in teaching strategies used by male and female English teachers at SMAN 1 Tejakula.

## 1.6 Research Significance

Research on how teacher gender may influence teaching strategy preferences is lacking. As we all know, knowing how a teacher's gender can influence the learning process in the classroom is very necessary. The influence of teacher gender on teaching strategy preferences will influence all aspects of the learning process, starting from interaction, and motivation to the results of the learning process later. Therefore, it is very important to carry out this research to be able to obtain several benefits, such as the following:

### a) Theoretical Significance

Understanding how the teaching strategy preferences of male and female English teachers can influence the English learning process in classrooms in Indonesia in general and in Bali in particular. By analyzing the teaching strategy preferences of English teachers, this study has theoretical significance in that it contributes deeply to the understanding of teachers' teaching strategy preferences. It is hoped that the findings of this study can enrich educational literature, particularly in the context of teaching English as a foreign language, and provide insights for developing curricula and professional teacher training to create a more inclusive and responsive learning environment tailored to students' needs. In addition, this study also has the potential to

serve as a guideline for further research discussing teachers' preferences for teaching strategies, thereby encouraging more effective and diverse teaching practices.

## **b) Practical Significance**

### **1. For Teacher**

This study can serve as a basis for developing the professional expertise of English teachers at SMAN 1 Tejakula and other schools. Teachers can use the insights gained to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching approaches, and then take steps to improve their skills in accordance with the research findings so that they can later support a more effective and optimal learning process.

### **2. For Educational Institutions**

By understanding the different preferences in teaching strategies among English teachers, schools can help design professional training programs or activities that are in line with the characteristics and needs of each teacher. Collaboration and teacher exchange programs can also be implemented by the school to provide new experiences for both teachers and students. Furthermore, these findings can serve as a reference for developing a curriculum that aligns with the individual characteristics of each teacher and creates a more inclusive and responsive learning environment. Additionally, these findings can act as a bridge for parents, the community, and the school to foster positive synergy among the various environments experienced by students.

### **3. For Future Researchers**

It is hoped that with this research, future researchers can make this research a foundation or guideline for developing similar research in the future. Future research is also expected to examine more deeply the factors that influence the selection of reading teaching strategies by teachers as well as identify new factors that may emerge in the future. This will certainly broaden the scope of gender-related research and can develop a deeper understanding of teaching strategies and the dynamics that exist in them.