

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

English education plays a crucial role in today's educational development, especially in the era of globalization. As the world's lingua franca, English serves as the primary medium for cross-cultural communication and international information exchange (Mulatu & Regassa, 2022). With the rapid advancement of technology and increasing human mobility, English proficiency has become a strategic necessity for individuals to actively participate in global interactions (Septiani et al., 2019). Acknowledging this, many countries, including Indonesia, have made English a compulsory subject at various educational levels, from primary to upper secondary school (Mulatu & Regassa, 2022). In this context, English instruction is not only focused on grammar and vocabulary acquisition but also on developing intercultural communication competence, critical thinking, and adaptability in diverse communication settings (Susanto, 2022; Kustiawan et al., 2022).

Although not an official language in Indonesia, English holds strategic value within the national education system. The Indonesian government has integrated English into the national curriculum to prepare young generations for global challenges. English is taught as a functional skill supporting global literacy and 21st-century competencies (Sari & Mustika, 2021). Besides improving students' linguistic abilities, structured and relevant English learning opens broader access to global academic resources, higher education,

and international career opportunities (Lestari & Suarnajaya, 2020). Therefore, the integration of English in the national curriculum forms a crucial foundation for producing competent graduates who are ready to compete globally.

In this framework, the curriculum plays a vital role in directing the orientation, quality, and relevance of education in Indonesia. The curriculum not only determines what should be taught but also how learning should be conducted to achieve national education goals. Based on Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System Article 1 Paragraph 19, curriculum is defined as a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, teaching materials, and methods used as guidelines for learning implementation. Thus, the curriculum is dynamic and continuously evolves in response to changes in time, global demands, local needs, and advancements in science and technology (Sari, 2022). In the context of English instruction, a flexible and adaptive curriculum is needed to ensure that teaching is not only linguistically focused but also supports the development of relevant 21st-century competencies.

In recent decades, Indonesia's education system has undergone various curriculum reforms to respond to dynamic societal needs and global developments. One significant moment occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, when face-to-face learning was replaced nationwide by remote learning systems. This emergency condition required rapid adjustment in instructional approaches, leading to the introduction of the Emergency Curriculum. This curriculum was designed to simplify basic competencies and

provide flexibility for schools to develop learning strategies suitable to local contexts, student characteristics, and technological infrastructure limitations (Iskandar et al., 2022). This flexible approach marked the beginning of a paradigm shift in Indonesia's education from uniformity to a more contextual and adaptive model. It also highlighted the importance of curriculum innovation that is not only responsive to crises but also focused on long-term competency development relevant to future challenges.

Following the pandemic, the Indonesian government introduced the Merdeka Curriculum as a strategic move to transform the national education system to become more adaptive to the demands of the times. This curriculum aims to foster more flexible, student-centered learning based on diverse learner needs. One of its main pillars is granting teachers greater autonomy in designing contextual, differentiated, and relevant learning aligned with the characteristics of students at each educational unit (Kajian Akademik Kurikulum Merdeka, 2024; Suksesi & Subkhan, 2022). This approach not only allows for greater teacher creativity but also supports the integration of teaching strategies aligned with character development and essential 21st-century competencies. The curriculum emphasizes methods such as project-based learning that encourage collaboration, problem-solving, and innovation. In this framework, the development of the 4C skills Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity is positioned as a core foundation in the learning process (Mansyur et al., 2024). Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum provides both conceptual and practical foundations for teachers to

select and implement more contextual and transformative teaching strategies, including in English instruction.

In English language teaching, instructional strategies play a vital role in determining learning effectiveness, especially in addressing 21st-century education challenges. The strategies selected by teachers directly influence student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Zaid et al. (2019) assert that contextual teaching strategies tailored to learners' needs can significantly enhance learning quality. Theoretically, traditional teaching approaches are influenced by Larsen-Freeman's (2013) views, which emphasize methods such as Grammar-Translation, Audio-Lingual, and the Direct Method, focusing more on structural mastery and repetition as primary learning tools. These approaches tend to be teacher-centered, emphasizing accuracy and control in language use.

However, over time, more modern and dynamic approaches have emerged, as described by Hosaini et al. (2022) in the Theory of Modern Teaching Strategy. They emphasize that contemporary teaching strategies should be based on flexibility, collaboration, technological integration, and active student involvement through methods like project-based learning, problem-based learning, and digitally assisted instruction. These modern strategies aim to build 4C competencies that align with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, integrating structured traditional strategies with participatory modern approaches can create a more comprehensive and meaningful learning experience for students. In practice, the effectiveness of these strategies greatly

depends on teachers' professional competence in selecting, adapting, and applying the most appropriate approaches for their classroom context and student characteristics.

Furthermore, the choice and implementation of teaching strategies are not only influenced by curriculum and pedagogical approaches but also heavily shaped by internal teacher factors, especially teaching experience. Teaching experience influences how teachers perceive classroom dynamics, design instruction, and respond to students' needs. Novice teachers, still in the process of exploring their professional identity, tend to rely on procedural and structured lesson plans. They often face challenges in classroom management, show less flexibility in dealing with situational changes, and may not yet fully master reflective teaching practices (Burns & Richards, 2009). These limitations result in strategy choices that lean toward conventional, textbook-oriented instruction.

Conversely, experienced teachers have undergone the development of both pedagogical and metacognitive competencies. They typically demonstrate greater flexibility and adaptability in managing instruction. Khairunisa et al. (2023) state that experienced teachers possess intuitive abilities to read student needs and can contextually modify learning strategies. In practice, they more frequently integrate innovative approaches such as digital media use, collaborative learning, and project-based strategies that align with the Merdeka Curriculum and modern teaching theory. Differences in pedagogical decision-

making thus become one of the key factors influencing overall student learning experiences.

These differences are rooted in the cognitive frameworks and pedagogical competence formed by years of teaching. Experienced teachers have typically undergone reflective cycles in their professional practice, which enhance their classroom awareness and foster more strategic pedagogical decision-making. They tend to be more innovative in integrating learning technology, selecting appropriate media, and aligning methods with student characteristics and changing educational contexts (Mustika & Wardah, 2021). Their extensive experience also contributes to higher confidence in exploring project-based learning and collaborative activities that foster 21st-century skills. Laila et al. (2020) highlight that experienced teachers can create active, engaging, and student-centered learning environments due to their strong interpersonal skills, classroom control, and pedagogical flexibility. On the other hand, novice teachers are often still internalizing pedagogical principles and may require guidance in exploring effective teaching strategies. Thus, it is essential to understand how teaching experience shapes strategy preferences in real classroom practice, particularly in English instruction at the junior secondary level.

Although various studies have explored teaching experience and instructional methods, research specifically focusing on how experience influences the strategy preferences of novice and experienced English teachers at the junior secondary level particularly in Bali remains limited. Most existing

studies emphasize the general effectiveness of teaching methods without differentiating the characteristics of strategies employed by novice versus experienced teachers in real classrooms. In fact, a deeper understanding of the strategy preferences of these two groups is crucial, especially in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes autonomy, differentiation, and contextual learning. This research aims to address this gap by identifying and understanding the teaching strategies selected by novice and experienced junior secondary English teachers, as well as how their teaching experience shapes pedagogical decision-making. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study explores classroom instructional practices in-depth, particularly in developing 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. The findings not only enrich theoretical literature on English teaching strategies but also offer practical insights into teacher professionalism development for designing adaptive, relevant, and transformative instruction in the modern education era.

1.2 Identification of Research Problem

Research on teaching strategies has grown rapidly during and after the pandemic, especially in terms of teachers' adjustment to distance learning and the integration of digital technologies. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the application of digital technology in learning, making flexibility and innovation a critical necessity in the teaching and learning process. With the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the focus of education has shifted to meet 21st century demands, such as critical thinking

skills, collaboration, creativity and digital literacy, significantly influencing teachers' teaching strategies. However, research on the variation in strategies used between experienced and novice teachers is limited, especially in Singaraja. Experienced and novice teachers tend to use different strategies in utilizing technology and developing teaching methods, which impacts teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. This difference in experience creates a knowledge gap regarding how the level of teaching experience can influence the strategies used by teachers. Therefore, it is important to investigate how differences in teaching strategies between novice and experienced teachers can affect the success of English language learning, particularly at SMP Negeri 1 Seririt, so that more effective approaches can be formulated to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

1.3 Problem Limitation

This study focused on the teaching strategies used by novice and experienced English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Seririt. The main focus is on teachers' preferences for teaching strategies used in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. This study will not assess the direct impact of teaching strategies on student learning outcomes or attempt to generalize the findings beyond the context of SMP Negeri 1 Seririt.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on background of the study above, the research question can be seen as follows:

1. What are the strategies used by English novice teachers in SMP Negeri 1 Seririt?
2. What are the strategies used by English experienced teachers in SMP Negeri 1 Seririt?
3. How do the teaching strategies used by English novice and experienced teachers differ in SMP Negeri 1 Seririt?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To describe teaching strategies employed by novice English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Seririt.
2. To describe the teaching strategies employed by experienced English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Seririt.
3. To describe the differences in teaching strategies between novice and experienced English teachers in the context of SMP Negeri 1 Seririt.

1.6 Research Significance

1.6.1 Theoretical Benefits

This study is expected to provide a significant theoretical contribution by exploring the differences in teaching strategies employed by novice and experienced English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Seririt. The findings will offer deeper insights into how teaching experience shapes instructional approaches, which may inform the development of more effective, adaptive models for English language teaching in junior secondary schools. Additionally, this study

is anticipated to enrich the academic discourse in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

1.6.2 Practical Benefits

A. For English teachers

This study is expected to assist both novice and experienced English teachers in enhancing their instructional practices and professional growth. By identifying the differences in their teaching strategies, the findings may guide teachers in selecting more effective approaches to support student achievement in English language learning.

B. For future researchers

This study is expected to be a reference and first step for future researchers to further examine the comparison of novice and experienced teachers' strategies in teaching English. The findings from this study can serve as a basis for developing more comprehensive follow-up research on similar topics in the future.