

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia has driven educational attention toward adaptive teaching practices that support students with Down syndrome in acquiring basic English conversation skills through classroom interaction (Long & Guo, 2023; Murtadlo et al., 2025; Padmadewi et al., 2024; Zain et al., 2022). As inclusive education promotes equal learning opportunities (Padmadewi et al., 2026). This research aims to analyse the implementation of Montessori method in teaching basic English conversation to a student with Down syndrome at Singaraja Montessori School. Previous studies revealed that students with special needs tend to improve their social interaction, self-confidence, and communication skills when supported by responsive teaching strategies (Aisy & Aprilia, 2025; Aktepe et al., 2021; Dewi et al., 2025; Mavric, 2020; Yazıcıoğlu & Aktepe, 2022). In practice, basic English conversation is essential as it leads students with Down syndrome to develop English conversation skills and interact with peers from varied backgrounds. (Aklima & Ginting, 2024; Avianita et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2016; Hidayati & Amalia, 2025; Sudana & Rusdiansyah, 2024; Sundari & Aprilia, 2024). However, students with Down syndrome commonly experience limitations in verbal expression, delayed speech development, unclear pronunciation, vocabulary retention difficulties, and barriers in bilingual interaction due to trisomy 21 conditions affecting their intellectual and physical development (Aggeliki, 2019; Farias et al., 2020; Haddad et al., 2018; Hamadelseed et al., 2023; Hüls et al., 2021; Sinaga et al., 2016; Soccorso et al., 2024; Varshney et al., 2022). These challenges frequently influence their participation in English conversation activities, particularly in highly interactive classrooms.

One educational approach highly responsive to Down syndrome's learning characteristics is the Montessori method, which emphasises multisensory learning, concrete experiences, structured routines, and individualised instruction (Chen & Guo, 2023; Ngoc, 2023; Richards & Rodgers (2001). Montessori classroom environment supports basic English conversation learning through a prepared environment, guided activities freedom, individualised learning, and self-independence, which help reduce cognitive overload and anxiety for students with special needs (Caballero et al., 2022; Padmadewi et al., 2023; Ratminingsih et al., 2024). Likewise, the Montessori method facilitates students with Down syndrome to learn language gradually through repetitive exposure, multimodal stimulation, and individualised pacing. Consequently, the implementation of Montessori method is important in supporting the basic English conversation development of

students with Down syndrome. Previous studies found that Montessori-based learning settings influence students' motivation, engagement, and language participation in inclusive classrooms (Agustin, 2020; Miftahul et al., 2024; Usop & Sari, 2021; Silvita & Hermanto, 2023; Fitriansyah et al., 2024). Studies in Thailand, Indonesia, and the United States showed that Montessori-oriented learning contributes to the development of bilingual interaction, vocabulary acquisition, and basic English conversation among students with diverse educational needs (Handayani, 2012; Zavala, 2022; Sarnyos et al., 2023). Thus, understanding how Montessori teaching techniques support the implementation of basic English conversation for a student with Down syndrome is fundamental in an inclusive education setting (Anthony, 1963; Brouwer & Sins, 2022).

At Singaraja Montessori School, the implementation of the Montessori method is integrated into basic English conversation learning through multisensory and child-centred instructional practices. Based on preliminary observations, teachers utilise Montessori teaching techniques through tools such as tactile learning media, flashcards, sandpaper letters, realia, role-play activities, interactive games, and repetitive conversational routines to facilitate the communication development of the student with Down syndrome. According to Yunidar et al. (2025) and Adnyani et al. (2021), these concrete and sensory-based learning materials support students in recognising vocabulary, understanding sentence structures, and practising simple expressions such as “good morning,” “thank you,” “how are you,” “what is that,” “where is this,” and self-introduction phrases like “my name is,” “his name is,” and “this is” through direct interaction.

Despite the increasing implementation of Montessori education in Indonesia, previous studies largely focused on cognitive development or general learning outcomes among neurotypical students rather than examining the implementation of Montessori techniques in basic English conversation learning for students with Down syndrome (Lillard et al., 2017; Siaviki et al., 2025). In North Bali, Singaraja City, no empirical studies have yet explored how Montessori teaching techniques support the English conversation needs of students with Down syndrome in inclusive English learning settings. This gap indicates the necessity of conducting a deeper analysis regarding the implementation of Montessori-based basic English conversation learning in supporting the English development of a student with Down syndrome. Hence, this research aims to analyse how Montessori teaching techniques are implemented in basic English conversation learning and how these techniques support the basic English conversation needs of a student with Down syndrome at Singaraja Montessori School, in Bali, Indonesia.

The research gap that has been stated previously leads to two novelties in this research. The first novelty lies in the exploration of knowledge related to the optimal capability of the Montessori method in teaching basic English conversation to a student with Down syndrome at Singaraja Montessori School. Besides, the novelty is also concerned with the Montessori method, which includes basic

English conversation-oriented teaching techniques that can overcome challenges to English language development in conditions of intellectual disability of the Down syndrome student. At the school, for instance, teachers modify Montessori tools such as sandpaper letters (textured letter cards) and flashcards with a combination of English and Indonesian to improve the English conversations of Down syndrome. Thus, this research has the potential to contribute a new reference and literature for educational institutions in North Bali.

1.2 Problem Identification

The current study has holistically identified several issues that have become inhibiting factors in comprehending both the challenges and pedagogical contributions of the Montessori techniques to teach basic English conversation to a student with Down syndrome at Singaraja Montessori School. Based on the background of the problems outlined earlier, the following are the problem identifications for the research:

1. Lack of Deep Understanding of the Supportive Montessori Techniques of Teaching Basic English Conversation Using the Montessori Method to A Student with Down syndrome in Octopus Class (Class for students with grades 1, 2, and 3)

Despite multiple studies demonstrating that the Montessori techniques could result in optimal learning results for children from any background, there is still a lack of comprehension about how the techniques could potentially enhance the ability to speak English of the student with Down syndrome. Previous research has mainly concentrated on the cognitive development of neurotypical children, but with little attention given to the Montessori techniques' optimal capability to teach basic English conversation to bilingual children with special needs. Thus, any educational parties must look into the pedagogical contributions of utilising the Montessori techniques to teach basic English conversation to a student with Down syndrome at Singaraja Montessori School, particularly how this aspect may help the student develop communication skills, boost self-confidence, and promote broader social interactions.

2. Emerging Teaching Challenges and Adaptive Montessori Strategies in Teaching Basic English Conversation to A Student with Down Syndrome

Based on further observations in the field, the teacher of the Octopus Class at Singaraja Montessori School is dealing with various challenges in implementing the Montessori teaching techniques for a student with Down syndrome. These challenges range from difficulties in adapting teaching materials and learning aids to fit the specific needs of the student, as well as limitations in available resources and support. Apart from that, teachers also have to cope with the challenge of

creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, where the student with Down syndrome can interact effectively with their peers who have different backgrounds. At its core, the research study is conducted to identify and analyse these existing challenges, as well as to find solutions that can help teachers optimise the process of teaching English to the student with Down syndrome in an inclusive environment.

Advanced observations revealed that, in spite of the Montessori teaching techniques having been implemented for a long period of years, their capability in supporting the basic English conversation of the student with Down syndrome has not been evaluated in-depth due to the lack of previous research studies and literature. Hence, this problem identification phase intends to present a broader perspective of the gap between existing practices in the context of inclusive education, as well as to direct further research into the development of more optimised Montessori learning strategies.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

The qualitative research was conducted only on certain components to remain focused and deep in its analysis of the problem. Broadly outlined, the research solely focuses on identifying the importance of implementing basic English conversation teaching using the Montessori method through Montessori teaching techniques implemented by teachers at Singaraja Montessori School. Subsequently, the problem analysis study is based on the application of the Montessori method in teaching basic English conversation with particular attention to the challenges faced by the student, such as limited verbal expression, difficulty in memorising vocabulary, and barriers to bilingual social interaction. In order to maintain consistency and relevance, the study will not cover students with other disabilities, non-Montessori educational environments, students with higher language competence, or broader aspects of language learning. Thus, the limitations made in the research can deliver objective explanations and results.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What specific Montessori techniques are implemented by teachers in facilitating basic English conversation to a student with Down syndrome?
2. How do Montessori-based activities support the learning needs of a Down syndrome student when acquiring basic English conversation skills?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To analyse the specific Montessori techniques that are implemented by teachers in facilitating basic English conversation to a student with Down syndrome.

2. To analyse how Montessori-based activities support the learning needs of a student with Down syndrome in acquiring basic English conversation skills.

1.6 Research Significance

The study has important significance in the context of inclusive education, particularly for teachers and a student with Down syndrome at the Octopus Class. Thus, the researcher expects that the research can contribute to the development of literature regarding the application of the Montessori method in teaching basic English conversation, with a focus on appropriate teaching techniques for students with disabilities involving the Montessori method itself.

a. Theoretical Significance

The research is expected to provide theoretical benefits in the development of literature regarding the application of the Montessori method in the context of inclusive education, especially for students with Down syndrome. In fulfilling the existing research gap, the study potentially can enrich the understanding of the adaptability of the Montessori method in basic English conversation.

b. Practical Significance

Practically, the research has the potential to provide benefits to the parties involved, both within and outside the scope of Singaraja Montessori School, including:

1. For Students with Down Syndrome

This research can support students with Down syndrome in improving their communication and social interaction skills in English lessons through a method that is more suited to their learning needs.

2. For English Teachers

For English teachers and tutors, the results of this study can suggest new references and strategies in teaching English in order to design more inclusive and optimal learning.

3. For Other Researchers

For researchers in the field of education, the study can be used as a reference if intrigued by discovering more about the Montessori method, techniques, and inclusive education.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1. Montessori Method

An educational method prioritising self-directed learning, sensory-rich environments, and individualised pacing, which was founded by Maria Montessori (Lillard, 2006).

2. Basic English Conversation

The skills to engage in simple verbal exchanges using foundational vocabulary, greetings, and sentence structures effectively in simple conversational contexts (Hasyraf et al., 2026; Ngullie et al., 2025).

3. A Student with Down syndrome

A child diagnosed with a genetic condition characterised by developmental delays, including cognitive, distinct facial form, and linguistic challenges requiring specialised educational approaches (Antonarakis et al., 2021; Poudel, 2023).

