

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

As an international language, English has become the bridge of communication across people in different countries with diverse cultures and backgrounds, which makes it important in global interaction. (Astutik & Munir, 2022). Therefore, Indonesia, a country that considers English a foreign language, introduces the language to students at an early age to prepare them to compete in an era of globalization. In order to achieve the learning goals in learning English, the learning process should employ mindful learning and effective strategies. Piscayanti (2021) stated that mindful learning can improve students' emotional regulation. Furthermore, effectiveness in learning English is influenced by a variety of factors. The teacher's role, curriculum, and environment are the factors that influence learning English.

The teacher takes a significant role during the learning process, especially in learning a foreign language. Teachers are a resource that helps students identify their language learning difficulties (Fitria, 2024). However, a teacher's role is more than that. Teachers are the foundation and compass for students during the learning process. They take responsibility for students' academic achievement and skills and guide them to be someone who has moral character. The teacher's role is beyond the academic context. It influences students in fostering their personal growth, self-esteem, character, and critical thinking. This statement is

in line with Alfiah et al. (2025), where the study emphasizes that teachers' role is significant in shaping the character of students. Besides fostering personal growth and academic achievement, creating a comfortable and supportive learning environment for students during the learning process is also a teacher's responsibility. Comfortable and supportive learning environments increase students' positive feelings. When students feel safe, respected, relaxed, and enjoy the learning process, they tend to participate more in the class. This statement is supported by a study from Al-Jarrah et al. (2024). It highlights that emotions play a crucial role for students during the learning process, especially in learning a foreign language. Both negative and positive emotions have a significant influence on students' achievement.

Therefore, becoming a teacher is not easy. They have a lot of responsibility. A great teacher needs four core competencies as the foundation for teaching. According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 14 of 2005, Article 8, which regulates teachers and lecturers (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 Tentang Guru Dan Dosen, 2005a), there are four aspects that fall under the competency of teachers. Pedagogical competence, social competence, personality, and professional competence: Pedagogical competency is the ability of a teacher to manage the learning process in the classroom, which involves planning, implementing, evaluating, and understanding each student's development (Supratman et al., 2024). Mastering teaching skills and acquiring

pedagogical competence are needed in order to enhance the quality of the learning process.

Besides pedagogical competency, a great teacher also needs social skills in the teaching process. Social skills are important for teachers to interact with others. Poor and great social skills from teachers could influence the learning process in students' academic achievement (Suman et al., 2023). According to Batee et al. (2025), teacher social competence is a teacher's ability to interact with students, colleagues, parents, and the community. This competency is essential in building a supportive and collaborative environment that enhances students' engagement. Social competence from the teacher could influence the way the teacher understands the students' needs, communicates the learning goals clearly, and creates a learning space where the students feel valued and included. Teacher who builds good interactions and relationships in the school environment is a teacher who succeeds in applying their social skills.

Social competencies from a teacher come from a great personality. Although theories in teaching are important in the class, teachers' noncognitive characteristics also have an impact on students' achievement. Teachers' noncognitive characteristics in this context refer to teachers' personality, which contributes to the development of positive relationships and effective communication with students, parents, and other teachers. Besides pedagogical competence and social competence, a great teacher requires good personality.

According to Alrishan et al. (2023), teachers' personality influenced students' behavior and their attitude toward the learning process.

Among those three aspects, there is an additional aspect that is also significant for the teacher. It is a professional competency. Professional competence refers to the basis of professional ethics, where it based on education, training, supervised experience, or appropriate professional experience (Fernández et al., 2024). Although a teacher has social skills, professional skills, and personality, professional competence remains a foundation in ensuring the quality of education. In the school environment, professional competence refers to a teacher's degree and certificate. This competency convinces that the teacher has mastered the learning material and is well prepared to teach.

The teacher's role is indeed a crucial factor in determining effectiveness in learning English. But there are also other factors that determine the effectiveness in learning English. As it is stated before, those factors are the curriculum and environment. Astal (2023) stated, the curriculum refers to a structured plan that serves as a foundation for students to learn in an educational setting. In Indonesia, the curriculum frequently undergoes changes to accommodate evolving needs and keep pace with technological advancements. The implementation of the curriculum in Indonesia has seen numerous revisions and improvements, starting in 1947, 1964, 1968, 1973, 1975, 1994, and 1997, which focused on character education, nationalism, and religious values. Then, continued with the 2004 Competency-Based Curriculum, 2006 School-Based Curriculum, the 2013

curriculum, and the most recent development is the Merdeka Curriculum (Oktaviani et al., 2024).

Curriculum is one of the aspects that influences the effectiveness in learning English as it shapes what students learn, how they learn, and how their progress is measured. It aligns with a study conducted by Abidin et al. (2023) that stated curriculum development is important in order to impart knowledge to students. The developed curriculum assists teachers in applying effective teaching methods while emphasizing the importance of language through vocabulary development, reading, speaking, and writing skills. Effective teaching methods provide a good quality of teaching. Therefore, a well-structured curriculum has a significant role in determining the effectiveness of learning English.

Environment is as significant as the curriculum and the teacher's role in determining the effectiveness of learning English. According to Zhang (2023), learning environment refers to a place involving physical, social, and cultural environments where students learn. The environment has a significant impact on learning achievement. A good learning environment could improve students' learning effectiveness, especially in English class. A suitable learning environment supports student to be more concentrated and enhances their learning efficiency.

A supportive learning environment could be characterized by decent resources, positive teacher-student relationships, learning materials, and

comfortable facilities at school. These could enhance students' engagement, enjoyment, and efficiency in learning English. This statement aligns with a study conducted by Li and Xue (2023), where it is found that students' engagement is influenced by teachers' behavior in the teacher-student relationship, support through learning resources, and environmental support.

Among these factors (teacher competencies, environment, and curriculum), the teacher-student relationship plays a central role because it directly shapes students' emotions, participation, and engagement in the classroom. Therefore, this study focuses on the teacher-student relationship as its primary area of investigation. The relationship between teachers and students significantly influences the quality of the learning process, particularly in shaping students' participation, emotional experience, and academic engagement in the classroom.

Teacher-student relationship refers to a social and emotional bond between the teacher and students, shaped by mutual trust, respect, support, and effective communication (Wang, 2023). A positive teacher-student relationship is characterized by a high level of closeness, appropriate dependency, and low conflict between the teacher and students (Pianta, 1999). The quality of this relationship is determined by a combination of three aspects, which are teacher characteristics such as teacher behavior and competencies, students' characteristics such as motivation and behavior, and contextual factors, such as environment and curriculum. This conceptualization is a combination of Skinner and Belmont's (1993) theory of teacher behavior and Pianta and Steinberg's

(1992) perspective on relational closeness, which together emphasize that the teacher-student relationship develops through emotional connection, behavioral interaction, and classroom dynamics.

Across previous studies, a positive teacher-student relationship is a key factor that supports students' motivation, confidence, and willingness to participate in learning activities. When students perceive their teachers as supportive, respectful, and emotionally responsive, they are more likely to show active involvement in the learning process, which in turn strengthens their academic engagement (Afrilia et al., 2024; Wanders et al., 2020). These findings suggest that the teacher-student relationship not only contributes to students' emotional comfort but also functions as a motivational resource that encourages students to participate actively in classroom activities.

Students' engagement is also related to how they perceive the emotional climate of the classroom and the nature of their interpersonal connection with the teacher. Previous research has highlighted that the warm, empathetic, and respectful behavior of teachers fosters a supportive learning environment in which students feel safe to express their ideas, ask questions, and participate in class discussions. Those perceptions enhance students' confidence and sense of belonging, leading to better readiness in participating in learning activities (Li, 2022; Zainullah et al., 2023). These findings indicate that engagement is not only a behavioral indicator but also an affective response that develops when students

experience trust, acceptance, and psychological comfort within the teacher-student relationship.

Another factor that has been linked to engagement is learning enjoyment. Enjoyment refers to a positive emotional state in which students experience satisfaction, interest, and enthusiasm during the learning process. Studies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning contexts show that students who experience enjoyment tend to be more curious, more interacting, and emotionally involved in classroom activities, which contributes to higher levels of engagement and improved learning outcomes (Merghani et al., 2024; Sucipto et al., 2023). These findings indicate that enjoyment is not only an emotional reaction but also functions as a component of engagement, reinforcing students' willingness to participate actively in learning.

Findings from the researcher's preliminary interview and classroom observation in a public junior high school in Tabanan also support the link between teacher-student relationship, enjoyment, and engagement. Based on the interview session with the teacher, the teacher reported that the teacher-student relationship is indeed important in influencing students' engagement and enjoyment during English learning, although students' interest and enjoyment also contribute to these outcomes. Classroom observation further showed that teacher behavior influenced students' emotional responses and level of participation. In the first meeting, the teacher used a more formal approach and full English instruction as a form of "Shock Therapy", which made students tense

and less engaged. However, in the following meeting, the teacher adopted a more relaxed and friendly interaction style, while still setting appropriate boundaries, which led to a more comfortable classroom atmosphere and increased student engagement. These findings show how variations in teacher behavior could influence students' emotional experiences and level of involvement, which is consistent with theoretical perception linking behavior, relationship quality, and engagement.

Although previous studies have examined teacher-student relationships, learning engagement, and enjoyment, many of them examined these topics separately or only focused on students' perceptions. There are only a limited number of studies that have integrated these three aspects within the same framework and explored how they are perceived by both teachers and students. Perception is important in this context because it reflects how individuals interpret and give meaning to their interactions and experiences in the classroom (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Perception is shaped not only by sensory experience, but also by expectations, needs, and prior experiences (Bruner, 1957), which means that teachers and students may interpret the same relationship in different ways. Therefore, understanding both teachers' and students' perceptions of the teacher-student relationship is essential to explain how this relationship may influence students' engagement and enjoyment.

Based on these considerations, this study aimed to explore the teacher-student relationship and its relation to learning engagement and enjoyment from

both teachers' and students' perceptions. Examining these aspects together is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how this relationship in the classroom shapes students' emotional experience and participation.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the preliminary observation, the researcher identified a problem in the classroom. It was found that not all students show active engagement and enjoy the learning process. Some students appeared less motivated, passive, easily distracted, and did not really pay attention to the teacher. On the other hand, several students show enthusiasm, high interest, active participation during English class, and seem to enjoy the learning process. This contrast leads to questions about how it happened. Seeing the interaction in the class between teacher and students, and the contrast of students' behavior, the researcher is interested in the teacher-student relationship in the classroom because it showed that some students seem close with the teacher and show positive behavior. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study about the teacher-student relationship and its influenced to students' enjoyment and engagement from the perception of teachers and students.

1.3 Research Limitation

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, this study is conducted only in the English subject, focusing on two classes of eighth-grade students at *SMP Negeri 1 Kediri*, located in Tabanan, indicating the

findings may not be generalizable to students in other classes, grades, or schools. Second, the data collection from this study relies on three methods, which are interviews, observation, and open-ended questionnaires. Although this data collection strengthens the credibility of the study, each method has its own limitations. For instance, an interview might be influenced by participants' social desirability bias, where they tend to answer the questions in a way they believe will be viewed positively by others, rather than responding honestly. On the other hand, observation might not capture students' or teachers' natural behavior if they are aware of being observed. Last, questionnaires might not fully reflect students' emotional states or engagement level due to misunderstandings of the question or a lack of deep meaning responses.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the teacher-student relationship in English Classes?
2. What are students' perceptions of the teacher-student relationship in English Classes?
3. How does the teacher-student relationship influence students' engagement in English classes?
4. How does the teacher-student relationship influence students' enjoyment in English classes?

1.5 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To explore teachers' perceptions about the teacher-student relationship in English Classes.
2. To explore students' perception about teacher-student relationship in English Classes.
3. To analyze how the teacher-student relationship influences students' engagement in English classes
4. To analyze how the teacher-student relationship influences students' enjoyment in English classes

1.6 Research Significance

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The result of this study is intended to enhance study related to the teacher-student relationship, particularly on its relation to influence students' enjoyment and engagement in learning English.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

a. For Teachers

The results of this study are expected to provide teachers with new insight of how their relationship with students influences both engagement and enjoyment in the classroom. By recognizing factors

that influence students' engagement and enjoyment, teachers are hoped could design strategies that not only focus on delivering material, but also build students' engagement and enjoyment.

b. For Students

The results of this study are expected to help the students to be aware of the role of their emotion, especially enjoyment, and engagement in the learning process. By understanding that enjoyment and positive relationship with teacher are important to enhance their learning achievement, students could be more open in communication with the teacher and participate in the class.

c. For Researcher

The results of this study are expected to be useful for other researchers who have a similar topic to this study. It is hoped this study will provide a clear picture of teacher-student relationship toward students' enjoyment and engagement.