

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the research, statements of the problem, objectives of the research, and significance of the research.

1.1 Background of the Research

The recent advancements in English language education, as noted by Syafrizal and Haerudin (2018), reflect the global shift towards early English instruction for young learners, driven by the demands of globalization. In Indonesia and similar contexts, there is a growing recognition of the importance of instilling English proficiency in children from an early age. This significance arises from English's status as an international language serving as a communicative bridge across nations (Oktaviani & Fauzan, 2017). The significance of vocabulary in learning a foreign language, highlighted by Ghalebi et al. (2021) and Bristi (2015), underscores its role as a foundational element and building block for effective communication and linguistic competence. This prioritization is attributed to the ease with which children grasp vocabulary, making it a fundamental aid in developing essential language skills, such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing (Asipi et al., 2023).

Dealing with young learners presents unique difficulties compared to instructing adults, primarily due to the heightened pressure on the psychological aspects of these students. According to Copland and Garton (2014, in Hestetraet, 2018), the term "young learners" refers to individuals typically at the pre-primary and primary levels, encompassing an age range from approximately 3 to 11 or 12 years old. Young learners possess distinctive characteristics that teachers must consider when planning activities, leading to challenges in designing appropriate materials and engaging activities (Mahadewi et al., 2018). The complexity of addressing these challenges emphasizes the importance of identifying effective teaching methods in English Young Learners' (EYL) classrooms.

In teaching English vocabulary to young learners, creativity is key. This involves selecting engaging materials and strategies tailored to capture the interest

of these learners. Recognizing the distinctive characteristics of elementary school students, such as their enthusiasm and playfulness, requires departing from traditional methods. To create an effective learning environment, teachers must integrate imagination and creativity into their methodologies, as highlighted by Syafrizal and Haerudin (2018).

There are several previous studies related to learning vocabulary for young learners (Mahadewi et al., 2018; Syafrizal & Haerudin, 2018; Agustin, 2019; Deni & Fahriany, 2020; Safira & Rusiana, 2021). The first study was conducted by Agustin in 2019. It was found that the English teacher employed Spelling Rules and Keeping Records as techniques, with songs as the chosen medium. The second study conducted by Mahadewi et al. (2018), revealed that teachers implemented diverse teaching strategies, supported by a range of teaching media, to instruct vocabulary. This variation facilitated increased exposure for the students to various vocabularies. Another study by Syafrizal and Haerudin (2018) employed a descriptive qualitative approach, exploring vocabulary-building strategies for young learners. The study revealed details on materials, teaching techniques, and media employed by teachers. Strategies included translation, memorization, games, and singing songs, utilizing media such as pictures, real objects, and students' English books.

Recent studies have primarily focused on formal educational settings, with a growing interest in alternative environments like English First EF. Established in 1965, EF is a globally recognized institution offering language training, cultural exchange, and academic programs. EF provides a unique learning experience beyond traditional classrooms. Investigating language acquisition in these dynamic environments offers insights into the impact of non-traditional settings on learning outcomes.

In EF English First, the vocabulary teaching system is designed to be enjoyable for very young learners. The activities are enjoyable, incorporating creative techniques to keep the children engaged and happy. The selection of activities is imaginative, fostering enthusiasm and participation. This approach stands out from conventional schools, as EF has a rule prohibiting the use of the

native language, contrasting with conventional schools that often allow the use of Bahasa to explain vocabulary meanings. In EF, English is exclusively used for communication.

Given the extensive body of prior research and the widespread popularity of EF English First as a prominent destination for English language learning in Indonesia, the current study explores the teaching techniques used by instructors at EF English First in Sidoarjo for very young learners. Focusing on the unique context of EF's specialized program, the research focused on uncovering effective teaching techniques for vocabulary acquisition. By examining the practices employed in this distinct setting, the study contributes insights into fostering language acquisition within the EF English First framework.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Refers to the background of the research, the statement has described the questions as follows:

- a. What techniques are used by the teachers at EF English First Sidoarjo in teaching vocabulary to very young learners?
- b. What factors influence the teachers' techniques in teaching vocabulary to young learners at EF English First Sidoarjo?

1.3 Objectives of the Research

According to the statements of the problem, the study's objectives are:

- a. To identify the techniques employed by teachers in teaching vocabulary to very young learners.
- b. To explore the factors that exert an influence on teachers' techniques when teaching vocabulary to very young learners.

1.4 Significance of the Research

This study holds theoretical importance by contributing to our understanding of English language education, particularly in the context of EF English First in Sidoarjo. The exploration of teaching techniques for young learners aged 3 to 6 aims to provide theoretical insights into effective pedagogical approaches within the EF English First framework. Furthermore, in terms of

practical significance, examining the distinctive needs of young learners and the specialized program designed for them will enhance our understanding of language acquisition in this age group. Educators can benefit from practical and informed guidance derived from the study, influencing the development and improvement of language education practices.

1.5 Definition of Terms

1. Teachers' Techniques: Teachers' techniques are the practical step in the teaching process to help the students feel engaged and interested in the material.
2. Teaching Vocabulary: Teaching vocabulary involves imparting and facilitating the learning of words, terms, and expressions within a specific language, enabling learners to understand, recognize, and use a diverse range of words effectively.
3. Very Young Learners: Very Young Learners are students in the range of 3-6 years old (preschool education).
4. EF English First: EF English First is an informal global course in Indonesia with the international standard. Established in 1965, EF is a globally recognized institution offering language training, cultural exchange, and academic programs.