CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents research background, research problem, objectives of the research, the significance of the research, scope and limitation of the research, and definition of key terms.

A. Research Background

In this era, foreign language proficiency particularly in English has become an essential skill that student must possess. In Indonesia, many educational institutions have begun implementing multilingual approaches to support the development of students' global competencies. One such institution is "SMP Internasional Darul Akhwan", an Islamic-based school that employs three primary languages Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic as the mediums of instruction in its teaching and learning processes.

To enhance students' English proficiency, SMP Internasional Darul Akhwan not only utilizes the national curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education, but also adopts the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah* (KMI) curriculum from Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. The integration of this dual curriculum aims to strengthen students' language abilities, with particular focus on the active use of English in both academic and non-academic daily activities.

Despite the implementation of dual curriculum, teaching English in a multilingual classroom has several challenges. These challenges stem from

the diverse educational backgrounds of the students, such as elementary school (SD), Islamic elementary school (MI), and others. Additionally, students' daily communication often relies on their native languages, further compounded by limited instructional time. These factors contribute to varying levels of English proficiency among students, posing difficulties for educators in designing appropriate and effective teaching materials.

There are several reasons for selecting this research subject. First, the multilingual classroom context of SMP Internasional Darul Akhwan is unique, as it integrates Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic into daily instruction, thus offering rich dynamics to explore. Second, seventh grade is a crucial stage in students' academic development since the language foundation established at this level strongly influences their success in later grades. Third, the diversity of students' educational backgrounds creates varying levels of English proficiency, which presents both opportunities and challenges for teachers. Finally, the results of this study are expected to provide both theoretical contributions to the literature on multilingual education and practical insights for teachers and schools in managing multilingual classrooms effectively.

Previous studies have shown that multilingual or bilingual classrooms strongly influence students' language learning processes, particularly in terms of classroom dynamics, instructional challenges, and the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Several researchers highlighted that students' diverse

linguistic backgrounds can create unequal levels of participation and comprehension, making it necessary for teachers to adjust their approaches in order to maintain inclusive learning environments[1][2][3]. These findings suggest that the interaction between classroom dynamics, adaptive teaching strategies, and students' prior educational experiences plays a critical role in shaping the success of English learning in multilingual settings.

In line with those findings, the preliminary study conducted by the present researcher at SMP Internasional Darul Akhwan revealed several important issues. Based on initial observations and interviews, it was found that students' English proficiency levels vary significantly depending on their elementary school background. Learners from bilingual private schools adapted more quickly to English instruction, while those from public schools and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah struggled and tended to rely on Bahasa Indonesia or Arabic during classroom interactions. Teachers frequently employed translanguaging strategies to bridge these differences, but limited instructional hours restricted students' opportunities to practice English extensively. Furthermore, students' motivation was found to be uneven: some were enthusiastic and eager to improve, while others perceived

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[1] Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2015). *Towards a holistic approach in the study of multilingual education.* In J. Cenoz & D. Gorter (Eds.), *Multilingual education: Between language learning and translanguaging* (pp. 1–15). Cambridge University Press.

[2] García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education.* Palgrave Macmillan.

[3] Tomlinson, B. (2001). *Materials development.* In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 66–71). Cambridge University Press.

English as too difficult, which affected their participation in learning activities.

To address these challenges, educators are required to adopt adaptive and creative teaching strategies to ensure that the learning process remains effective and inclusive. Strategies such as translanguaging, the use of interactive media, and project-based learning methods serve as viable alternatives to enhance student understanding and participation. Therefore, it is essential to conduct an in-depth study of multilingual classrooms and identify the most effective approaches for teaching in multilingual settings.

The preliminary findings indicate that while multilingual education provides opportunities for language enrichment, it also generates significant pedagogical challenges. Previous studies have largely focused on bilingual settings or on the role of language anxiety, but few have examined how multilingual classroom dynamics intersect with students' diverse backgrounds and adaptive teaching strategies in the Indonesian junior high school context.

Therefore, by understanding the research contexts above, the gap identified in previous studies, and the preliminary study conducted by the present researcher, it becomes necessary to conduct further research with specific focuses. The first focus is to describe the dynamics of English learning in a multilingual Grade 7 classroom at SMP Internasional Darul Akhwan, particularly in relation to students' varied educational backgrounds.

The second is to identify the challenges teachers face in delivering English instruction within this multilingual environment. The third is to explore the strategies employed by teachers to overcome these challenges and to support students with different levels of proficiency. As the case and explanation above suggest, the researcher is therefore interested in conducting a study entitled: **"Teachers' Practices in Teaching English for the 7th Graders in Multilingual Classroom Context at SMP International Darul Akhwan".**

B. Research Problem

From the background above, the researcher compiled the formulation of the research problem as follows:

1. How is the English learning dynamic in the multilingual 7th Grade classroom at SMP Internasional Darul Akhwan?

2. How do teachers manage and experience the process of teaching English in this multilingual classroom?

3. How do teachers apply their strategies in teaching English to 7th Grade students?

C. Research Objectives

Based on the research problems above, the researcher compiled the objectives of the research as follows:

1. To describe the dynamics of English learning in the multilingual 7th grade classroom at SMP International Darul Akhwan.

2. To identify how English teachers manage and experience the process of teaching English in a multilingual classroom.

3. To explore the strategies used by teachers to overcome the challenges in teaching English to 7th grade students within a multilingual learning environment.

D. Reserch Significant

1. **Theoretical Significance**

   This study is expected to contribute to the development of theories and scholarly discussions in the field of English language teaching within multilingual classroom environments. The findings may also enrich the literature on effective and adaptive teaching strategies for students with diverse educational backgrounds.

2. **Practical Significance**

   a. **For teachers**, the findings of this study may serve as a reference for designing more inclusive and responsive English teaching strategies that address the diverse needs of students in a multilingual classroom.

   b. **For schools**, this study may provide insights to support curriculum development and teacher training initiatives that align with the challenges of multilingual instruction.

   c. **For future researchers**, the results of this study can serve as a foundation for further research on English language instruction in linguistically and culturally complex educational settings.

E.   Scope and Limitation

1.   Scope of the Study

A This study is delimited to the exploration of the English learning dynamics, teachers' experiences, and instructional strategies applied in the multilingual seventh-grade classroom at SMP International Darul Akhwan, Tulungagung. The institution adopts a multilingual instructional policy that integrates Indonesian, English, and Arabic as the primary languages of communication, both within the classroom and in daily school interactions.

Employing a Qualitative Descriptive Phenomenological design, this research seeks to capture and describe the lived experiences of teachers and students as they occur naturally within the multilingual learning environment. The study focuses on how teachers manage multilingual instruction, how students respond to the coexistence of multiple languages, and how English language learning unfolds in this unique classroom context. Rather than testing hypotheses, this approach aims to provide an in-depth, descriptive account of participants' perspectives and the classroom realities that shape English language learning in a multilingual setting.

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students, and documentation analysis. These instruments were employed to gain comprehensive and authentic insights into the participants'

experiences, language use, and the instructional practices implemented in the English classroom.

2.   Limitation of the Study

A The scope of this study was restricted to Class VII-C at SMP International Darul Akhwan during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The research participants comprised two English teachers and six students who were purposively selected from a total of seventeen students in the class.

The decision to select only six students as the primary participants was guided by the phenomenological orientation of the study, which prioritizes depth of understanding over numerical representation. These six participants were chosen to represent diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds, ensuring the inclusion of students with varying levels of English proficiency, different tendencies in language use, and distinct prior schooling experiences.

The selection criteria included: (1) active participation in classroom activities, whether verbal or nonverbal; (2) willingness to participate in interviews and share personal learning experiences openly; and (3) representation of varied educational backgrounds, encompassing public elementary schools, public Islamic elementary schools, and private Islamic elementary schools.

By limiting the number of student participants, the researcher was able to engage in deeper phenomenological exploration of each participant's experience, providing nuanced and contextually grounded interpretations of the data. Consequently, while the findings offer rich and detailed insights into the multilingual English learning process, they are context-specific and not intended for broad generalization to other educational settings.

F. Definition of Terms

1. Multilingual Classroom

A multilingual classroom refers to a learning environment where three languages are actively used as mediums of instruction. In the context of this study, it involves the use of Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic alternately or simultaneously at SMP Internasional Darul Akhwan. multilingual education aims to develope students' multilingual competence and prepare them for global engagement[4].

2. English Language Learning

English language learning refers to the systematic process of developing students' English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing[5]. This process is carried out through

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[4] Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2015). *Multilingual Education: Between Language Learning and Translanguaging*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–3.

[5] H. Douglas Brown, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (5th ed.; White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, 2007), pp. 6–10.

both academic and non-academic activities integrated with the school's curriculum and instructional approaches.

3. **Diverse Educational Backgrounds**

Diverse educational backgrounds refer to the variation in students' prior learning experiences before entering junior high school. This includes students who come from public elementary schools (*Sekolah Dasar Negeri)*, private islamic schools (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta)*, or public slamic elementary schools (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri*), each of which may offer different levels of exposure to English. These differences affect students' initial English proficiency levels[6].

4. **Teaching Strategies**

Teaching strategies are the approaches and methods employed by teachers to effectively achieve learning objectives. In a multilingual classroom context, these strategies may include translanguaging (the flexible use of multiple languages within a single interaction), project-based learning, interactive media, and differentiated instruction to accommodate students' varied language proficiencies[7].

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[6] James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks, *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), pp. 1–10.
[7] Ofelia García & Li Wei, *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 5–18; Carol A. Tomlinson, *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms* (2nd ed.; Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2001), pp. 8–16.