

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a comprehensive description of the research. It comprises the background to the problem, formulation of the problem, operational definitions, aim of the study, and significances of the study.

1.1 Background

Gender differences in language learning strategies related to females and males have become one of the most prominent discussions for researchers over the years. There are several differences in language learning strategies used by students where female students tend to focus on the socio-cultural and psychological dimensions, while male students are based on concepts (Brilian, 2023). Within the concept of gender, there were terms called gender identity, which is how a person perceives himself as female or male (Arif, 2022). Females are usually sensitive, intuitive, passive, and emotional (Aslan, 2009). In contrast, Kiesling (2008) explained that males focus more on solidarity in socializing situations and are composed when making decisions. It can be concluded from the experts' explanation that females and males have different attitudes and emotions.

In addition to gender differences, language learning strategies are also factors that affect EFL learners' success. The success can be seen in how students respond to learning materials that are taking place in class and studying at home, depending on how students learn (Brilian, 2023). Wirawan (2017) stated that students would not be able to master English quickly and successfully if they did not have a strategy for language learning. The learning strategies students apply to improve speaking skills are diverse, which can certainly result in various mastery and performance.

Speaking skills are important for conveying thoughts orally to the public, so students have to work on their speaking mastery. In reality university students have diverse speaking mastery abilities, especially in public speaking class, and their different ways of learning to speak can contribute to the

differences in speaking mastery (Puluhulawa, Hafifah & Mayasari, 2022). The core theory that the author used in this aspect is the idea of learning strategies proposed by Oxford (1990), which divides learning strategies into two types, namely direct strategies (memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensatory strategies) and indirect strategies (metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, social strategies). Therefore, Mahmud and Nur (2018) declared that learning strategies can be effective or efficient depending on the learning strategy chosen by students, which must be based on their interests and cannot only use one learning strategy that is evenly distributed. Finally, language learning strategy is the best way or process for each student, especially in learning public speaking, which includes using direct or indirect strategies.

Speaking is a natural human ability and has positive characteristics. There are several types of speaking, including imitating, intensive, responsive, and extensive (Nikitina, 2011). The classes can support learning and speaking in English (Arif, 2022). Females and males have differences in speaking. Public speaking is quite crucial for students because there are many benefits when delivering public speeches. Moreover, Ibrahim (2020) also argued that public speaking offers many guidelines and other skills such as how to plan a speech text, train speech content, interact with the audience, be aware of changes in body language and facial expressions, think more positively, and overcome nervousness in front of the general audience because learners will become confident speakers who must be able to convince the audience.

In addition, public speaking is a continuous communication process in which a message, a symbol, and a meaning always occur, as well as the presence of speaker and listener interaction (Rahayu, 2018). Public speaking usually has different functions at the time of the speech which are intended to inform news, influence, or even entertain the audience. It is also supported by Sugiyati and Indriani (2021) that speaking in public is a crucial ability to be mastered in considering a demand that currently exists in many kinds of fields, including delivering information or giving speeches in large or small forums such as in a

class that can be aimed at giving entertainment to the audiences. Speaking and public speaking have become a complete package, and both were especially crucial for students.

The phenomenon was from the researcher's experience studying public speaking during the second semester of 2021. The researcher found that male students were more active in public speaking classes but had average test scores, while female students were less active but achieved higher test scores than their male counterparts. The purpose of researching gender differences in language learning strategies is for students to be able to follow strategies derived from the experiences of students who have managed to get high scores in public speaking class according to their gender. This research also allows lecturers to be able to adjust teaching to students using learning strategies according to their gender.

There has been a plethora of research conducted on language learning strategies in public speaking, one of which was conducted by Puluhulawa et al. (2022). This research aimed to find and explore what learning strategies students use in public speaking classes. In addition, Wahyuni (2022) investigates how gender influences the learning strategies employed by Indonesian EFL tertiary students to enhance their speaking skills. Prior studies were limited to three themes, such as gender differences, language learning strategies, and public speaking. This is crucial to investigate because the researcher wants to see whether gender differences determine how students choose their language learning strategies in public speaking classes. Researchers used the case study method, interviews as a data collection technique, and thematic data analysis to find out how gender differences can determine undergraduate students' language learning strategies in a public speaking class.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the research background above, the researcher formulated the question "How does gender differences determine undergraduate students' language learning strategies in public speaking class?"

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides the explanation related to this study, therefore:

1.3.1 Gender Differences : The division of gender among EFL students which is commonly categorized as females and males. In this study, gender differences refer to a difference in opinion and preferences between female and male higher-education students in chosen strategies to learn public speaking in class.

1.3.2 Language Learning Strategies : A learning strategy can be interpreted as a specific action or process used by learners to achieve learning goals. The way or strategy of students in learning public speaking is to get a quick and precise way to learn using different strategies.

1.3.3 Public Speaking : Public speaking is the process of delivering information in front of the class to the audience. Public speaking classes are classes for learning material and appropriate public speaking strategies.

1.4 Aim of the Study

This research aims to find out how gender differences can determine undergraduate students' strategies in learning public speaking.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

This study helped enrich the literature that shows gender differences can affect students' learning strategies for public speaking. Further researchers will benefit from seeing carefully how gender differences can create differences in choosing and using students' learning strategies for public speaking.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

This study is helpful for students, especially in terms of selecting strategies suitable for use in learning public speaking and students' interests, the benefit for teachers is that teachers or lecturers can provide a more effective way to teach public speaking for their students using strategies. As for the community, providing good direction for their families when their children or families are learning public speaking is beneficial.

1.5.3 Empirical Significance

This study has improved the researcher's knowledge about the effect of the student's public speaking class on learning strategies.