

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Language is an inseparable part of human life. Generally, every country has its national language or dialects, yet English is an international language used by people worldwide. That is why English is important to be learned by human beings throughout the world.

There are a number of researchers who reveal that gender influences the mastering of a language. One of these researchers is Dorian de Haan. He observes that gender influences the mastering of both the mother tongue and also a second or foreign language. de Haan. 12 May. 2007 <<http://www.ecr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/short/1/1/95>>

The difference between foreign and second language can be stated as follows: a Foreign Language is a language not spoken by the indigenous people of a certain place while a Second Language is any language learned after the first language or mother tongue. (Littlewood, 1994: 3)

Based on Dorian de Haan's research of some children between 11-15 years of age in Suriname, South America, de Haan concludes that girls are better at mastering

Dutch as a foreign language than boys. (de Haan, 1987) This makes me curious to find out whether the same result will be gained if a similar research is done in Indonesia. This is the main reason I would like to analyze in this thesis how gender influences the mastering of English as a foreign language for Indonesian children in their pre-teen and early teen years. The data will be taken from students of the TBI English course.

I choose The British Institute English (TBI) for my place of analysis as it is committed to providing excellent quality courses, first-rate customer service and individualized attention. The teachers are well-qualified to teach English and are carefully selected for their ability to deliver a rich variety of interesting and effective lessons. There is an informal classroom atmosphere there which encourages the students to communicate with other people in English. TBI special training courses focus on key workplace and professional skills development. TBI is highly regarded for its courses by students in Bandung and the courses are being continually upgraded. TBI's goal is to ensure that study at TBI is of the highest quality, through well-designed and well-presented courses using the latest course books and methodologies.

I use a psycholinguistic approach in this thesis to help me in analyzing the topic. Psycholinguistics is derived from the words Psychology and Linguistics. Psychology is the study of human behavior. Linguistics is knowledge about the essence of language, structure of language, how the language is acquired, and how the language develops. (Chaer, 2003: 5) Psycholinguistics is the study of language behavior; and of how people learn and use language to communicate ideas. (Taylor

and Insup, 1990: 3) Language activity is related to the mental activity; it has a close relationship with the process of the lateralization in the brain. The lateralization organizes the functions of either the left or the right side of the brain. Swain states that there are differences between boys' and girls' brains, related to the different lateralization process of the brain. (Swain, 1980) Lateralization reveals general differences between the brains of boys and girls, which impacts the language process between boys and girls.

Rod Ellis, Patsy Lightbown and Jeremy Harmer state certain other factors which can influence one's foreign language learning. They are: age, intelligence and aptitude, cognitive style, motivation, and personality. In analyzing this topic, I only consider age and motivation factors related to gender. The learner's age has a relationship with one's potential for success in language learning. According to Ellis's theory, the starting age of learning English and the time span of learning English is included in the same factor as age. (Ellis, 1984: 106-107) These factors can affect one's success rate. Moreover, motivation from the individual is an other factor. Motivation is divided into two types, namely, integrative and instrumental.

In analyzing this topic, gender is viewed by comparing the score of placement tests between boys and girls who want to join the general English course at TBI. After viewing the scores, I consider two of five factors, namely, age and motivation. The other factors mentioned in the previous paragraph are not considered owing to the fact that the parameters are not clear; in addition, the instrument to measure any influence towards the learning process of foreign language cannot be gained.

Statement of the Problem

In this thesis I would like to discuss the following questions:

1. How does gender influence the mastering of English as a foreign language for Indonesian children in their pre-teen and early teen years?
2. How do the factors of age and internal motivation influence the mastering of English as a foreign language by Indonesian children in their pre-teen and early teen years, in terms of gender?

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is:

1. To find out how gender influences Indonesian children in their pre-teen and early teen years in mastering English as a foreign language.
2. To find out the influence of the factors of age and internal motivation at the mastering of English as a foreign language for Indonesian children in their pre-teen and early teen years, in terms of gender.

Method of Research

First of all, I take 35 students between 11-15 years of age who have done a placement test in English language at TBI Bandung. Then, the data is collected from the result of the placement test of TBI students. After that, I interview the students to know their starting age of learning English, their time span of learning English and their internal motivation.

Organization of the Thesis

The present writer divides the thesis into three chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, contains Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Methods of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Next, Theoretical Framework is presented in Chapter Two. Chapter Three is the Discussion of my Analysis. The last chapter, Chapter Four, is Conclusion. It contains my comments on the findings. At the end of the thesis is the Bibliography, listing all books and Online information used in my thesis as references, and Appendices, presenting all the data of my analysis.