



A Teachers Role in Addressing Challenges and Strategies in Secondary English Teaching

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Abstract

This study explores the multifaceted role of English teachers in addressing the instructional challenges encountered at the secondary school level in Samarinda, Indonesia. Given the increasing demand for English proficiency and the limitations within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, this research investigates the core obstacles faced by educators and the strategies they implement to enhance student learning outcomes. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed, using structured interviews with purposively selected English teachers based on experience, educational background, teaching methodology, and school location. Thematic analysis revealed three principal themes: instructional challenges (e.g., time constraints, student apathy, technical limitations), pedagogical considerations in choosing learning strategies, and adaptive solutions such as differentiated instruction and peer collaboration. The findings highlight teachers' critical role in adjusting instructional methods to students' diverse needs and utilizing collaborative networks to overcome resource limitations. The study contributes original insight by focusing on localized, real-world teacher experiences in a specific urban-rural Indonesian setting an area that remains underrepresented in existing literature. It underscores the necessity of systemic support and continuous professional development for EFL teachers navigating complex classroom dynamics.

Keywords: Differentiated Instruction; EFL Challenges; English Language Teaching; Secondary Education; Teacher Strategies

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1. Introduction

English, as a worldwide lingua franca, is extensively utilized in education, commerce, and technology. In Indonesia, English is instructed as a foreign language, which poses distinct obstacles relative to second-language environments. Although English competence provides socio-economic advantages, its increasing prevalence poses a risk to local languages, highlighting the necessity for equitable multilingual education. (Zein, 2019; Turnbull, 2018; Macías Loor et al., 2024).



The function of English educators is vital in this setting. In addition to providing linguistic education, they function as motivators, evaluators, and exemplars. (Jaidi, Amalia, & Uswatun, 2021; Rifiyanti, Nurtika, Rahayu, & Nurhayati, 2024). Nonetheless, instructing English at the secondary level is frequently impeded by students' difficulties with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, lack of enthusiasm, apprehension over errors, and insufficient language exposure beyond the classroom. (Saud, 2020; Muhammad Athar Hussain, Hafiz Muhammad Haris, Faiz Ul Hassan Shah, Hafiz Muhammad Waqas, & Hafiz Hammad Nadeem, 2023; Wulandari, 2023).

These obstacles are exacerbated by systemic issues including antiquated approaches, constrained resources, and inadequate teacher preparation (Yin & Yuan, 2021). educators must implement interactive, technology-driven, and student-focused methodologies.

This study aims to investigate: (1) What are the primary obstacles encountered by secondary English educators? What solutions are utilized to tackle these challenges? What is the efficacy of these tactics in improving students' English learning outcomes?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative approach with an exploratory descriptive methodology to investigate the challenges and strategies in secondary school English instruction. The study sought to comprehensively understand teachers' lived experiences through a phenomenological perspective. Data were examined inductively, facilitating the emergence of themes from interview transcripts and yielding detailed insights into teachers' navigation of instructional challenges.

2.2 Population

The research population comprises all English educators employed in secondary schools in Samarinda. The research sample will comprise several English teachers selected according to particular criteria, including: (1) Teaching Experience, Educators with a minimum of three



years of experience in teaching English, to guarantee adequate familiarity with learning obstacles (Uzer, 2020), (2) Academic Qualifications, Educators possessing a degree in English education or a related discipline pertinent to language instruction, (3) Pedagogical Approaches Employed, Educators who implement innovative or technology-driven instructional strategies in their English language teaching (Wulandari, 2023), (4) Differentiations in Educational Institution Location, Educators in various school kinds, both public and private, urban and rural, investigate the impact of geography on the issues they encounter (Yin & Yuan, 2021).

This study used judgment sampling to ensure that the selected sample has sufficient diversity in terms of experience and background, thereby enabling richer and deeper insights into the challenges of teaching English in secondary schools.

2.3 Research Instrument

Data were gathered via structured interviews aimed at examining teachers' experiences with instructional problems and employed techniques. The interview protocol focused on three primary areas: pedagogical problems, strategy choices, and classroom solutions. This methodology facilitated systematic and comprehensive data collecting to discern patterns across many educational settings.

2.4 Data Collection Technique

Structured interviews were performed with chosen English teachers in Samarinda, either in person or over video conferencing, contingent upon their availability. Each session endured for 5–10 minutes, was documented with consent, and transcribed for analytical purposes. Field notes were additionally recorded. The interview concentrated on obstacles, strategic factors, and pragmatic methods in English training.

2.5 Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed thematically following (Crompton, Edmett, Ichaporia, & Burke, 2024), consisting of six stages: (1) familiarization via transcript analysis, (2) creating preliminary codes, (3) detecting themes, (4) evaluating theme significance, (5) defining and labeling



themes, and (6) disseminating findings. This process enabled a comprehensive grasp of how educators tackle real-world difficulties in varied classroom environments.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Findings

These findings were synthesized from the participants' experiences, highlighted to address the research questions, analyzed, and described narratively. The analysis generated 3 main themes, 6 sub-themes, and 13 codes. Due to space limitations, not all experiences are presented under each theme.

3.1.1 Teacher Challenges in English Language Teaching

Educators reported facing numerous problems in teaching English, many of which are interrelated and stem from both structural and student-related factors. Insufficient instructional time was among the primary concerns of the respondents. The likelihood of sustained exposure to the language is diminished due to the frequent interruption of English learning sessions by other activities, such as school tasks. The varying ability levels of pupils in a class intensify this time constraint, complicating teachers' efforts to furnish resources that are both accessible and beneficial to all students. Educators have seen diminished student interest and motivation, particularly among individuals who have not had English instruction at the elementary level or who perceive themselves as lacking proficiency in the subject. The absence of confidence hinders students' attention in class, often leading to a disinterested demeanor. Technical issues, such as unstable internet connections, complicate teaching, especially when trying to include digital resources into language acquisition. Educators must consistently adapt to these challenges and emphasize the need of institutional support networks.



Table 1. Teacher Challenges in English Language Teaching

Themes	Sub-Themes	Code	Sample Excerpts
Teacher Challenges in English Language Teaching	Challenges in Teaching English	Time limitation	“Limited time, some class hours are used for projects.” (Respondent 2)
		Students’ apathy & low interest	“Some students are already apathetic from the start.” (Respondent 3)
		Unequal student ability	“Differences in student ability.” (Respondent 1)
		Technical issues	“Internet connection often fails.” (Respondent 1)
	Biggest Classroom Challenges	Student passivity	“Their involvement in class is very passive.” (Respondent 2)
		Strategy selection complexity	“We need lots of ideas and must apply appropriate methods.” (Respondent 3)

The principal challenge educators have in the classroom is maintaining student engagement during the learning process. Many students sometimes exhibit passivity, avoid answering questions, and display minimal excitement for participating in group assignments or discussions. Educators encounter difficulties in evaluating students' knowledge and creating an engaging learning environment in the classroom due to this inactivity. Despite the additional load this preparation entails, educators must employ a variety of inventive tactics to enhance student engagement, including conflict-resolution activities, visual media utilization, and diverse instructional methods.

The difficulty of identifying successful pedagogical tactics is another pressing concern. Educators consistently face pressure to adapt their instructional methods to meet the different learning preferences of pupils, which can significantly differ even within a same classroom. They must achieve equilibrium between tactics that assist underperforming or less engaged students and those that captivate motivated and high-achieving learners. Lesson planning is exceedingly challenging due to this balancing act, especially when there is limited time for



reflection and evaluation. Consequently, with student behavior, instructors' professional demands to uphold their adaptability and creativity in restricted conditions also provide considerable challenges in the classroom.

3.1.1 Understanding of Learning Strategies

The interviewed educators demonstrated a comprehensive and diverse understanding of how instructional tactics should be adapted to meet the specific needs of each class. They recognize that various elements, including students' abilities, learning styles, classroom interactions, and gender differences, influence teaching effectiveness. It is widely perceived that male students exhibit greater physical activity and are more amenable to group and oral tasks, while female students tend to prefer writing projects due to their more reserved nature. This information influences teachers' selection of instructional tactics, meticulously considering whether a specific approach would effectively interest pupils and fulfill learning objectives. Learning strategies are developed by considering the specific environment and attributes of each class, illustrating that educators are not restricted to a singular approach but rather adapt their approaches to enhance educational results. The majority of respondents underscored the significance of experiential and practical learning, asserting that interactive activities such as role-playing, contextual discussions, and extracurricular engagements enhance information retention and foster increased enthusiasm among students. Teachers' extensive pedagogical expertise and sensitivity to students' needs are evidenced by their recognition of this approach's effectiveness.

Table 2. Understanding of Learning Strategies

Theme	Sub-Theme	Codes	Sample Excerpts
Understanding of Learning Strategies	Considerations in Choosing Teaching Strategies	Student ability & learning style	"Students' ability, their learning styles." (Respondent 2)



		Classroom condition & gender-based preference	“Male students are more active and suitable for group work; female students prefer writing.” (Respondent 1)
Effective Strategies in Teaching English	in	Practice-based learning	“Learning by doing... students really enjoy practical activities.” (Respondent 3)
		Role play	“Practicing the language in context through role play.” (Respondent 2)

The learning methods are selected deliberately, following a comprehensive assessment of each student's educational requirements. Prior to selecting instructional tactics, educators evaluate the disparities in students' foundational capabilities, the most efficacious learning modalities, and the level of student involvement. For example, educators generally prefer employing visual aids such as photographs or films in classrooms with students that excel in visual learning. Activities requiring practice and practical experience are generally prioritized for youngsters who exhibit higher levels of physical activity.

The overall condition of the classroom significantly influences the selection of learning approaches. Instructors note that student involvement in specific activities may be affected by gender disparities. Female students generally excel in writing-oriented tasks, but male students tend to exhibit greater enthusiasm for interactive and hands-on activities, such as group discussions. This discovery, however, does not facilitate instructors in implementing a rigid gender-based methodology. The study's findings provide insights into the creation of an inviting and intellectually stimulating learning environment.

Educators frequently emphasize the importance of experiential learning techniques that encourage students to engage actively in their education. Role-playing, simulation, and after-



school study are regarded as highly efficient in enhancing student engagement and maintaining comprehension of the subject matter. These strategies facilitate students' enhancement of their communication abilities in a more genuine and contextualized environment, thereby rendering the learning process more engaging.

3.1 Strategies to Overcome Challenges

Amid various challenges to English language education, educators emphasize the importance of collaboration and transparency in their methodology. Peer-to-peer discourse is a fundamental strategy wherein trainers consistently exchange data, learner profiles, and instructional experiences to more effectively address pertinent topics. These interactions take place in both informal discussions among colleagues and formal environments, such as the subject teachers' meeting (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran, or MGMP). This cooperative culture fosters intergenerational learning, with younger educators providing fresh perspectives on digital technologies and contemporary instructional methods, while experienced educators deliver emotional support and classroom management expertise.

Table 3. Strategies to Overcome Challenges

Theme	Sub-Theme	Codes	Sample Excerpts
Strategies to overcome challenges	Coping with Teaching Challenges	Teacher collaboration & discussion	"We often share with each other to make things easier." (Respondent 1)
		Peer support across generations	"Young teachers learn from seniors, and vice versa." (Respondent 3)
	Differentiated Instruction	Grouping based on ability	"I divide the class into groups; advanced students can coach their peers." (Respondent 3)

Educators implement a grouping method wherein more adept pupils coach their peers. This cultivates peer relationships, enhances leadership abilities, and instills a feeling of responsibility, while also assisting children with a weaker grasp of the topic to improve their



understanding. By tailoring their lessons to the ability levels of their students and fostering a culture of collective professional development, educators establish a flexible and resilient learning environment capable of addressing both systemic challenges and classroom issues.

3.2 Discussions

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to existing theories and previous research, with reference to the three main themes: (1) Teacher Challenges in English Language Teaching, (2) Understanding of Learning Strategies, and (3) Strategies to overcome Challenges. The discussion aims to analyze how the participants' lived experiences align with, reinforce, or expand upon the literature reviewed in earlier chapters.

3.2.1 Teacher Challenges in English Language Teaching

The study's outcomes reveal the array of complex and interconnected challenges encountered by secondary English language teachers in Samarinda. The principal issues commonly raised include time limitations, diminished student engagement, language discrepancies, and technological challenges. Teachers may find it difficult to effectively address each student's learning requirements and complete the entire curriculum due to sometimes constrained instructional time (Iqbal & Ali, 2024; Ranjit, 2022). The predominant number of students lack motivation to learn English, sometimes due to disinterest, apprehension around errors, or negative perceptions of the topic (Asif et al., 2021; A. K. & A. E., 2021). Moreover, classes generally comprise students with varying degrees of English competence, complicating lesson preparation and implementation (Iqbal & Ali, 2024; Abdelghani & Abdullah, 2023). These findings correspond with the research of Yin & Yuan (2021), which illustrated that curricular impediments and infrastructural deficiencies considerably affect instructors' difficulties in providing effective instruction.

The research conducted by Gajewska-Dyszkiewicz and associates (2014) aligns with teacher interviews concerning students' apathy and the difficulties encountered in learning English. The findings indicate that diminished self-esteem and a fear of failure often result in reduced



student involvement. Wulandari (2023) and Saud (2020) highlighted that students in Indonesian EFL classes often encounter difficulties with grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary due to minimal exposure and a lack of supportive environments beyond the classroom. The results indicate that teaching English at the secondary school level in Indonesia entails more than just language education; it necessitates a complex equilibrium among time, engagement, and customization. (A. K. & A. E., 2021; Journal, 2023).

3.2.3 Understanding of Learning Strategies

The research indicates that educators select their instructional strategies following extensive contemplation. Instead of employing a one-size-fits-all approach, they consider several elements, including classroom dynamics, gender preferences, learning styles, and student capabilities. This supports Aisyah's (2023) claim that effective English language instruction requires contextual knowledge and instructional strategies adapted to the diverse demands of students.

The utilization of experience-oriented learning techniques, including role-playing and practical activities, aligns with the tenets of communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritizes student interaction and real-world application over mere memorization. This is supported by the research of Ikbal & Sirayatika (2024) and Aritonang et al (2024), The utilization of experience-oriented learning techniques, including role-playing and practical activities, aligns with the tenets of communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritizes student interaction and real-world application over mere memorization. This is supported by the research of Ikbal and Sirayatika (2024) as well as Aritonang and colleagues (2024), this demonstrates that role-playing enhances students' confidence and language application in practical scenarios. Keristiana, Arbain, & Fitriana (2019) said grouping students during lessons is a priority for effective classroom management. It allows teachers to consolidate and monitor student actions efficiently, saving valuable instructional time. Teachers' proficiency in assessing the classroom environment and their capacity to modify techniques in response to



student feedback reflect their advanced pedagogical abilities and dedication to inclusive, student-centered education.

Teachers used a range of collaborative and pedagogically flexible ways to address the issues that were found (Nuraini et al., 2024; Sofiana, Mubarak, & Yuliasri, 2019). Peer collaboration was one of the most prevalent, occurring both formally through teacher working groups (MGMP) and informally through everyday interactions.

Differentiated instruction, especially ability-based student grouping, was another important tactic. This method encourages learning through peer scaffolding and social engagement, which is in line with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (2014). In addition to helping underachievers, teachers who let more experienced students mentor their peers also promote community and leadership in the classroom (Haelermans, 2022). These results highlight the value of flexible pedagogy, collaborative culture, and ongoing learning in managing classroom diversity and accomplishing educational objectives

4. Conclusion

This study examined the difficulties faced by English teachers in secondary schools, the instructional methods they utilized to mitigate these issues, and the efficacy of these methods. Thematic analysis of structured interviews revealed three primary themes: problems encountered in English instruction, educators' comprehension of pedagogical procedures, and their methods for surmounting these obstacles. Educators indicated challenges including restricted instructional time, passive student engagement, varying competence levels, and insufficient infrastructure, particularly regarding internet access. These factors frequently obstruct lesson delivery, necessitating continual adaptation. Participants demonstrated a keen knowledge of students' needs, choosing tactics informed by classroom dynamics and individual learning preferences.



To tackle these challenges, educators utilized collaborative and adaptive methodologies. Collaborative engagement among peers facilitated professional development and the exchange of exemplary practices, while differentiated instruction, namely through ability-based grouping, addressed the varied needs of students. These tactics underscore the significance of teacher adaptability, continuous professional development, and reflective practice in addressing the intricacies of English language instruction.

In light of these findings, it is advisable for educators to engage in professional learning communities, and for institutions to provide adequate time and digital resources to facilitate effective instruction. Future study should investigate the long-term effects of these tactics across various educational environments urban and rural, public and private utilizing quantitative tools to assess their efficacy.

Nevertheless, certain domains necessitate additional investigation to enhance the rigor and relevance of this work. The research inadequately investigates the influence of these tactics on student engagement and performance, and it fails to consider the significance of institutional support, including policies, training, and resources, in addressing teaching issues. Furthermore, it omits an examination of how educators evaluate the efficacy of the tactics they implement and their enduring impact on both student and teacher development.

Essential recommendations for enhancement encompass investigating the translation of these strategies into quantifiable advancements in student learning and engagement, analyzing the influence of institutional support and leadership in confronting pedagogical challenges, and exploring how educators evaluate and refine their methodologies over time for sustained efficacy. Rectifying these deficiencies will augment the study's contribution to comprehending English instruction in secondary education.



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