## *Classroom Interaction and Communication Strategies in English Learning: A Case Study at an Indonesian Elementary School*

**Hilma Wildana Shofia[1], Sri Wahyuningsih[2]**

[1,2]English Department, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kudus, Indonesia

*Corresponding author's email: hilmawildana652@gmail.com[1], wahyuningsih@iainkudus.ac.id[2]*

## Abstract

*In response to the needs of English language teaching in elementary schools, the case study explores the implementation of classroom interaction and communication strategies in English learning. This study aims to determine the learning strategies, communication process and the use of communication media applied in learning English in elementary schools. The data for this study involved English language teachers from an elementary school in Central Java, Indonesia. The study used qualitative methods by interviewing teachers to understand their views and experiences in managing classroom interactions and implementing communication strategies. The results from these interviews provided in-depth insight into teachers' practices for English language instruction at the primary level. The findings revealed that primary school students were more enthusiastic in learning. However, some obstacles were noted, including a shortage of projectors, the use of laptops, and the school's limited network. The implication of the research is that it provides valuable insights for curriculum development, teacher training and English language learning strategies at primary level, both in Indonesia and globally*

*Keywords: Classroom; Communication; Interaction; Learning; Strategies*

## INTRODUCTION

English is widely taught in countries around the world, including Indonesia, due to its status as an international language used for daily communication, business and academics (Wahyuningsih et al., 2023). Indonesia recognizes the importance of English in facilitating effective communication and therefore prioritizes its teaching. According to Ahmed., et all (2014) explanations, in connection with this, the government is committed to teaching foreign languages at all levels of education and continues to develop its teaching methodology for various reasons for the good quality of language teaching. Communication is the most important interaction in the English learning space. As explained by Sundari (2017) without the process of

interaction in human life, perhaps humans cannot live together because interaction or reciprocity is called a manifestation of communication. Without communication, there will be no interaction. Communication occurs if the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, feelings, or data between individuals. In learning, communication refers to the exchange of information, ideas and understanding between teachers, students and all students in an educational environment. According to Wahyuningsih (2021) Some countries classify English as a foreign language (EFL) since it is not their primary language or utilized for everyday communication. According to Trihastuti et al., (2018) This is a key aspect in the educational process because it plays an important role in transferring knowledge in skills from teachers or learning resources to students. Successful teaching strategies play a crucial role in fostering the learning experience, especially within the framework of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. (Ardasheva & Valentine, 2017) ;Bruen (2017).

Several previous studies have shown the significance of employing successful classroom interaction strategies cannot be overstated when it comes to promoting the English language development of students. According to  Abdusyukur (2022) Classroom interactions is one of the most important components in achieving effective learning, consequently experts agree that effective classroom engagement is crucial for generating great learning outcomes (Bui et al., 2021). As stated by Vettorel (2018) to develop communication competence, students must be able to communicate with both teachers and classmates, taking turns receiving comments, asking for clarification, and communicating actively. Language has a significant role in communication, whether people use their home language or a foreign language such as English in Indonesia. .Without proficient language and communication skills, effective communication becomes unattainable (Chiocca, 2020). Students have several opportunities to learn English; nonetheless, it is clear that learning objectives have not been met to their full potential. According to several research, many English teachers in senior high schools are unable to speak English Daar (2020), indicating that learning objectives have not been met to their full potential. According to Rido et al., (2014) teachers establish interactive learning settings where in students engage in communication with one another to construct meaning in the English language. In other terms, teachers no longer need to organize classroom interactions that allow students to actively participate in producing the target language through rounds, feedback and negotiation (Suryati, 2016). Previous researchers who have conducted research, such as Rahman (2015) has conducted research on the use of communication strategies in the teaching and learning process, using a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods (ethnographic approach). A qualitative method is employed to offer a comprehensive, naturalistic, and detailed depiction of speech act occurrences carried out by students. The findings of the study utilizing nonverbal communication tactics are intricately linked to enhancing student motivation through purposeful and sustained engagement.

The latest research on teacher interaction with students conducted by Maulana et al., (2012) unrevealed that teachers in Indonesia spend most of their time teaching in front of the class. There is almost no interaction with students, most teachers pay little attention to the student learning process and do not really pay attention to students' mistakes and misunderstandings. Researchers point out that although teachers in Indonesia are given greater autonomy to implement more active learning methods, many teachers fail to take advantage of this opportunity. Teachers worry that implementing active learning methods could increase their workload because this method requires teachers to spend more time preparing than teaching the whole class. Research that focuses on interaction in the school environment in Indonesia, for examples Daar, (2020) conducted research on classroom interaction in England. These researchers found that interaction patterns IRF teachers dominate class interactions and limit students' ability to contribute to class activities. This interactive model fails to achieve the communicative goals of English language teaching.

This study delves into a comprehensive exploration of the dynamics of classroom interaction in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the elementary school level and its correlation with students' communicative proficiency. The primary objectives of this research are threefold: (1) to identify the specific strategies employed in the teaching of English in elementary schools, (2) to scrutinize the communication processes between students and teachers during English learning sessions at the elementary level, and (3) to evaluate the utilization of communication media in the English language learning environments within elementary schools. Furthermore, the exploration of teaching strategies, communication processes, and media utilization is vital for informing educational practices. This knowledge not only aids in the continuous improvement of language instructions but also serves as a foundation for the development of evidence-based pedagogical approaches. Ultimately, a nuanced understanding of these elements can lead to more informed decision-making by educators and educational policymakers, positively impacting the overall languages learning experience for elementary school students.

## METHOD

This case study was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Dukuh Julu, Tlogorejo Village, Pati. Specifically, in the Winong Subdistrict of the Central Java Province. Information about this school was obtained from the reference.data.kemendikbud.go.id. The school employs English as the language for local educational subjects. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Dukuh Julu was chosen as the research site due to its accreditation with a grade, indicating high educational standards. The objective of selecting this school was to gain insights into effective English language teaching practices within an accredited educational environment and to comprehend the level of interaction in

English language classes as a Foreign Language (EFL) at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in the village of Torogorejo. The duration of the learning sessions was 2 hours a week, considering that English is a part of local curriculum. Two female teachers were recruited as research participants.

The table below illustrates the demographic characteristics of the two English teachers.

**[Table 1]** Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

| Characteristics | Teacher #1 | Teacher #2 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Age | 33 y.o | 24 y.o |
| Educational Background | Bachelor's Degree | Bachelor's Degree |
| Teaching Experience | 11 years | 5 years |

The research site, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Tlogorejo, offers a valuable context for studying effective English language teaching practices within an accredited educational setting. The demographic information of the two recruited female English teachers is provided in Table 1, offering a snapshot of their age, educational background, and teaching experience. This information serves as a foundation for understanding the profiles of the participants involved in research.

**FINDINGS AND DISSCUSSION**

Data were collected through a series of structured interviews conducted from November 22 to 28. The interview guide included questions related to English language teaching strategies, challenges faced at the elementary school level, the goals of English as a part of local curriculum, and the implementation of English in teaching. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to obtain more in-depth information about participants' perspectives on English learning. The duration of each interview ranged from 15 to 20 minutes, and the entire sessions were audio-recorded to facilitate the review of interview results. Each participant was given an anonymous code, such as teacher #1 and teacher #2, to protect the confidentiality of the data. The temporary codes were based on research questions and interview topics. The analysis process followed an approach known as reduction, as described by Sulistiyo et al., (2019), involving sorting, focusing, eliminating irrelevant data, and organizing data to present final conclusions that can be verified.

Following this, I present the interview data to identify issues that will be addressed by detailing and harmonizing all the data. Based on the analysis, two issues emerged: English language teaching strategies in elementary schools and English communication interaction in elementary schools. During data verification, the identified issues were corroborated by confirming other pieces of evidence to ensure the consistency of the conclusions, as described by (Sulistiyo et al., 2019).

The research aimed to explore English language teaching strategies as a part of local curriculum in elementary schools in the village of Tlogorejo. The results from structured interviews revealed two main themes with supporting data: (1) English language teaching strategies at the elementary school level and (2) communicative interaction between teachers and students in the context of English language learning in elementary schools. Findings from both themes provide answers to the research questions and highlight English language teaching practices in elementary schools, suggesting potential policies to enhance the quality of English language learning at this level. These findings not only contribute to understanding the current state of English language instruction in primary schools but also open avenues for policy considerations and potential improvements to elevate the overall quality of English language education in the community.

## Learning strategies for interaction and communication

Learning strategies for interaction and communication involve a series of steps or plans implemented by teachers to help students achieve learning goals. These strategies entail the use of specific methods or techniques to convey information, facilitate understanding, and motivate students in the learning process. The objective is to create an effective learning environment that supports the development of students' knowledge and skills Trihastuti et al., (2018). Teachers act as facilitators, delivering instructional materials, providing guidance, and offering feedback, while students play an active role by asking questions, conveying understanding, and participating in learning activities (Eliza, 2013)

### Teacher#1

*In teaching English, I am responsible for fourth to sixth-grade classes. In these classes, my teaching strategy involves giving instructions to students, which can be direct commands or instructional. For example, I might give students a command to sit, and they respond by sitting as instructed. Additionally, in the 2013 curriculum, English is not recognized as a primary subject at the elementary level. However, I still consider it an important local content to equip students, especially as they reach the sixth grade. To make learning more innovative, I often use methods such as presenting songs and inviting students to sing along. Besides the material from the book, innovation also involves the use of media, such as using a laptop to present more engaging learning materials for students.*

### Teacher#2

*The learning strategy I apply is contextual learning, which emphasizes student involvement in everyday life. For example, when I want to teach the sentence "saya makan" (I eat) in English, I translate it into "I eat." Teachers motivate and activate participation by encouraging questions, and those who can answer will be given rewards in the class.*

Learning strategies and communication are two key aspects in the process of learning the English language. Learning strategies encompass the approaches and techniques that students use to understand, remember, and apply learning materials. This includes methods of reading, writing, listening, and speaking that aid students in developing their English language skills. On the other hand, communication involves using language to interact and convey information effectively. In the context of learning English, communication proficiency involves understanding grammar, vocabulary, and using language appropriately in different situations. The effective combination of learning strategies and communication is crucial for success in mastering the English language (Sari, 2020).

Based on the interview results, there are two types of teaching methods. Teacher #1 teaches English using the expository strategy method, which includes steps to overcome various elements in the learning system aimed at delivering information or course materials directly to students. With this method, all materials are presented by the teacher, so students don't have to face difficulties (Gusita, 2017). Teacher #2 teaches with contextual strategy, which refers to a learning approach in the context of real or concrete life, allowing students to better understand and apply knowledge in everyday life situations (Eliza, 2013).

The author assesses the success of the strategies at Tlogorejo Elementary School because teachers develop and design their own teaching materials, which makes learning less burdensome for students due to the direct delivery of materials. However, it should be noted that teachers hope English will be included in the latest curriculum. Nevertheless, the implementation of this new policy has resulted in fewer English class hours compared to other mandatory subjects, and there is still no official or national curriculum for English in elementary schools (Sulistiyo et al., 2019).

**The use of medias and its challenges**.

The use of media in learning plays an important role in increasing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Educational media, such as images, audio, video, and interactive technology, can provide variety, visualization, and sensory stimulation that help students better understand concepts. The use of media can also increase student engagement, make learning more interesting, and assist students in overcoming comprehension difficulties. Interactive media can offer a more direct and profound learning experience. Furthermore, the use of media enables tailored teaching to different learning styles, allowing each student to grasp the material optimally. In addition, with modern technology, online learning, simulations, and digital learning resources can be integrated, enhancing accessibility and flexibility in learning. Thus, the use of media not only improves the efficiency of the learning process but also supports the holistic achievement of learning objectives.

The utilization of information and communication technology in learning

allows students to access information flexibly without time and place constraints (Santiana et al., 2021). The use of various media in the learning process serves as a tool to support the smooth implementation of desired learning. The success of learning is greatly influenced by the appropriate selection of media (Gusita, 2017).

**Teacher#1**

*Due to limited technology in our madrasa, we only have one projector. During English language teaching, I use a laptop to display images related to the lesson. I show pictures from the laptop I bring to illustrate the material.*

**Teacher#2**

*Teachers utilize technology to enhance learning by using specific applications to create materials and games, such as pinterest. In this application, teachers can find various ideas for elementary school students, including games, materials, and more. I also implement information technology (IT) in teaching. Because of IT innovations in children, we can use it to make children advanced in science and technology. Through IT, we can teach and create games effectively to capture the interest of elementary school students in learning.*

Teacher #1 could benefit from professional development opportunities that focus on incorporating technology even with limited resources. Training sessions or workshops could empower teachers to maximize the use of available tools for effective teaching. Teacher #2 practices highlight the potential benefits of incorporating technology and specific applications. Establishing a platform for teachers to share successful strategies, such as the use of Pinterest, can foster a collaborative learning environment among educators.

Based on the interview results, in the context of a madrasa with limited technology, having only one projector, the teachers wisely utilize the available resources. Despite the limitations, they still implement technology, such as using laptops, to enhance learning. One application used is Pinterest, providing many ideas for creating materials and games for elementary school children. Despite limited resources, teachers continue to innovate in the use of IT in teaching, designing engaging materials and games to motivate children. With this approach, it is expected that children can actively engage in learning, improving their skills in the fields of science and technology (Dewi et al., 2022).

**Evaluation of learning**

Evaluation in English language learning plays an integral role in mapping students' progress, providing feedback for improvement, enhancing student engagement, assessing and adjusting the effectiveness of teachers' teaching methods, identifying students' difficulties, shaping teaching policies, measuring the achievement of learning objectives, supporting exam preparation, and aiding in the selection of appropriate teaching methods based on evaluation results. Thus, evaluation serves as the foundation for improving the quality of English language

learning in the school environment. Evaluation serves as a benchmark for strategies to be re-implemented by an organization, and it is essential to determine whether the stated objectives have been achieved (Gusita, 2017).

**Teacher#1**

*According to me, the most effective strategy for elementary school children, besides memorizing vocabulary, is to involve them in activities of pronouncing those words. It is crucial at the elementary level, with the main goal being that children can not only remember vocabulary but also pronounce it correctly. Especially in the 6th grade, children are expected to have the ability to face practical exams. In this exam, speaking, reading, writing, and listening abilities are aspects that are tested. So, focusing on speaking and listening training from the elementary level can help them pass the practical exam with more confidence. The challenge lies in limited facilities, which disrupt the effectiveness of the learning strategy.*

**Teacher#2**

*In assessing English language students in elementary school, I use various methods, such as written exams, which evaluate students' understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills. Oral activities, such as engaging in conversations, are used to assess students' speaking and pronunciation abilities. Listening exercises involve conducting listening exercises with related questions to measure material understanding through audio media. Lastly, mid-term and final semester exams are applied as an overall assessment of students' understanding of the material. The obstacle I face is the lack of access to technology and networks in some schools.*

From the interviews, there are obstacles in learning, namely inadequate facilities. Additionally, the lack of access to technology and networks in schools can reduce students' accessibility to learning.

The implemented evaluation includes various methods such as written exams, oral activities, listening exercises, and semester exams, aiming to provide a holistic overview of students' understanding of the English language. In their English language learning, students are actively involved in vocabulary pronunciation activities, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that children not only memorize words but also pronounce them correctly, especially as they approach the practical exams in grade 6. This approach allows teachers to provide optimal support for students' development in speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills in English at the elementary level.

**CONCLUSION**

The teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Dukuh Julu, Tlogorejo Village, explain the use of expository and contextual teaching strategies in teaching English. Despite technological limitations, they creatively utilize available resources such as laptops

and projectors, as well as applications like Pinterest, to enhance the attractiveness of learning. Additionally, the role of interaction and communication in English language teaching is a key aspect. Teachers actively apply interaction strategies such as questioning and response, motivate students with rewards, and create an interactive learning environment. Despite challenges in facilities and technology access, teachers strive to provide a maximal learning experience. Learning evaluation is conducted through various methods, including written exams, oral activities, listening exercises, and semester exams. Factors such as a lack of facilities, limited technology access, and challenges in evaluation strategies pose obstacles in English language learning at the elementary school level.

It must be acknowledged that my research has limitations in the information retrieval process. This study is confined to two (2) English teachers in one elementary school in Pati, Central Java. Therefore, there is a lack of generalization or the process of extracting information from the research findings becomes impractical. Different findings or outcomes might arise from a study with a greater number of teachers from different schools. Despite these limitations, this study gives insights that can be used to advocate policy and as a starting point for further research on the same topic.

Based on the information presented earlier, this research proposes two recommendations for policymakers interested in the development of language education in elementary schools, with the aim of improving the quality of English language teaching to students in Indonesia. Our recommendations include: (a) Involving more teachers from various regions or school contexts to provide a more comprehensive insight into English language teaching practices at the elementary school level. It is essential to ensure that the selected sample reflects the diversity of regions or educational contexts to enhance the validity of the findings. (b) Engaging in comparative studies among different countries or educational contexts. Involving more countries or regions can provide a more comprehensive understanding of differences and similarities in English language teaching at the elementary school level. This can assist researchers and policymakers in identifying best to practices that can be adopted from various contexts.


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