

English Teaching Strategies at Rural Schools: A Case Study of SMPN 2 Plampang

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© 2025 The Authors. This open access help them understand the lesson. Future research should evaluate the effectiveness of these article is distributed under a (CC-BY) strategies and explore the impact of rural education policies on English learning.

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Abstract: This study investigates the strategies in teaching English in rural school, SMPN 2 Plampang. The subjects of this study are the English teachers and the 6 students in SMPN 2 Plampang. Qualitative approach with case study was employed in this research. The instrument that used in this study involved semi-structured interviews, along with classroom observations, the researcher used smartphones to records the interviews in order to gather the data needed, for classroom observation, the researcher use observation sheets and videos of the classroom learning situation. Content analysis was used as the data analysis approach for this study. The result of this study indicates four strategies used by the teachers: 1) Translating words meaning; 2) Corse materials matching students' level and learning situation; 3) Giving motivation; 4) Applying various teaching strategies. From students' perspective, translating lessons into local languages can

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INTRODUCTION

English language teachers find teaching the language very difficult and demanding, especially when doing so in rural locations where students are not exposed to the language much. English is a foreign language taught in Indonesia. Since people only learn this language in school and do not use it in daily life. Gunantar (2016), the goal of English has been claimed to include not just global but also local considerations. In urban areas students are even homeschooled. They start to learn English at a young age because their parents create a learning environment for them, so the children get used to the English language at an early age. Meanwhile, in rural areas, especially for those students at SMPN 2 Plampang, the first-time students get to learn English is in Junior High School. Even though they started to learn English in Junior High School, they still could not learn it properly because they didn't have the facilities to learn English, and it made the teachers even more difficult to teach. English as a foreign language teaching in rural areas has grown to be a significant issue. The majority of English teachers in rural schools do not have teaching credentials, according to Febriana et al. (2018). Another problem in teaching English at SMPN 2 Plampang is not only the access or the facility but also the students themselves, because they do not receive much motivation from their parents or environment when they want to speak or learn the English language.

Almost all of the students at SMPN 2 Plampang have a farming background, so students do not care much about their study and school, especially in English, they think learning English is not important and useful. This argument is also supported by family and community opinions that think it is better to learn other things such as science. Teachers at SMPN 2 Plampang find it difficult to choose what strategies they should use when teaching; this is due to the limited media they can use to teach and the low interest of students in learning. Because of those difficulties, teachers at SMPN 2 cannot always follow the strategies that the teachers at urban school used. According to Eggen & Kauchak (2012), a strategy is defined as a general plan or set of guidelines designed to help teachers achieve their instructional goals and objectives. It

serves as a framework that educators use to organize and deliver instruction in a way that enhances student learning and engagement.

Strategies can be adapted based on the learning context, student needs, and subject matter, ensuring that the teaching process is both effective and efficient. Teachers have a number of strategies at their disposal to accomplish learning objectives, including questioning and going over prior content. Teachers can effectively engage students in conversation and encourage active participation in the teaching and learning process by using questioning. Additionally, teachers can use reviewing prior content to assess their students' comprehension of it and provide comments on their homework.

Teaching strategies encourage students' active participation in learning and the creation of knowledge, as noted by Caro et al. (2016). It is the responsibility of educators to assist pupils in the processes required for knowledge construction. Teachers have a crucial role in helping students create their knowledge, and they can do this by utilizing instructional tactics. The adoption of an appropriate teaching approach by educators is crucial, and they should go above and beyond in their search for the most effective method to use during the teaching and learning process. Teachers at SMPN 2 Plampang have difficulty in determining which strategies they should use to teach that can help students, because it is very difficult for teachers to determine this due to the low interest of students and also the lack of facilities for teaching and learning at the school. For example, when teachers want to use visual learning strategies such as flash cards to teach vocabulary to students, teachers cannot do and use the strategy because there are no flash cards that they can use.

The strategy that teachers usually use at SMPN 2 Plampang is Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Problem-Based Learning (PBL) works well for teaching English at SMPN 2 Plampang because it helps students practice the language in real-life situations. PBL encourages students to use English for speaking, listening, reading, and writing while working in groups, sharing ideas, and solving problems together. This strategy doesn't require expensive media or advanced technology, so teachers can create projects using local

resources. By focusing on practical skills, PBL helps students improve their English and connect it to their daily lives.

This study builds on insights from four previous studies that explored challenges and strategies in teaching English in rural areas. Anggela et al. (2024) identified difficulties like limited facilities and low student motivation in South Sumatera. Zulaeha & Riyanti (2024) examined similar challenges in Sebangki, focusing on solutions like media use and student motivation. Khulel (2021) highlighted socioeconomic factors and the Covid-19 pandemic in East Java. Lestari (2019) explored how teachers in Lombok adapted the national curriculum using local cultural practices. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on SMPN 2 Plampang, a rural junior high school in Sumbawa. It emphasizes focus on both teachers' strategies and student perspectives, which have not been comprehensively addressed in prior research. This study uses a case study design with semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The design of this study was qualitative research. This type of research methodology entailed gathering information in order to describe the state of situations or conditions. Using a case study and qualitative research, the aim was to understand the strategies used by English teachers in rural areas. According to Creswell (2014), a case study gives scholars the opportunity to comprehend, examine, and research an ongoing situation in order to learn more about it.

In this study, the writer used SMPN 2 Plampang. The participants in this study were two English language teachers and six students at SMPN 2 Plampang. The study included two English teachers as participants. Since they were the only English teachers employed by the institution, they were specifically chosen. As they were born and raised in the area, they justified the teaching situations and strategies they chose for use at SMPN 2 Plampang above numerous others. The students were selected using purposive, proportional, and stratified sampling. Six (6) students were chosen, with two students selected from each grade (grade 1 to grade 3). The 6 students were 3 males and 3 females, and they were considered the smartest and most active students in their respective classes.

Semi-structured interviews and observations were employed by the researcher to gather data for this study. The researcher used a phone to record the interviews and to write down the teachers' answers during the interviews. The observations in this study helped the researcher obtain more organized and structured results. During the interview and observation processes, the researcher used a smartphone to record the interviews and take videos of classroom observations. Video and audio recordings were taken to improve the accuracy of the data collected.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. There were 12 questions used in this study, namely 6 questions for teachers and 6 questions for students. Due to the flexibility of the semi-structured format, the researcher was able to create follow-up questions based on the participants' answers. The purpose of this approach was to gather in-depth information about the difficulties associated with teaching English in rural areas. Interviews were conducted over three days, and observations were conducted over four days. Interviews were recorded using voice and

video recording devices to ensure accuracy, and this procedure was repeated until sufficient information was collected.

In analyzing the data for this study, the researcher employed content analysis to systematically review and interpret the responses from both teacher interviews and student perspectives. The first step involved gathering all relevant information from interviews with the teachers and students as well as classroom observations. After transcribing the interview responses and classroom observation notes, the researcher engaged in a thorough reading of the data to identify common themes and patterns related to the teaching strategies and students' perspectives on learning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to know the strategies used by the teachers at SMPN 2 Plampang and the students' perspective. Based on the result of the study the researcher found that there are four strategies used by the teachers at SMPN 2 Plampang namely: 1) Translating words meaning, 2) Course materials matching students' level and learning situation, 3) Giving motivation, and 4) Applying various teaching strategies. Based on the student's perspective they are likely to understand the material or the lesson better when the teachers translate it for them, it is due to the lack of vocabulary.

Teaching Strategies

Teachers in SMPN 2 Plampang stated that the teaching and learning process is not attached to one strategies or method, due to limited access that the school have, so the teachers must try various strategies in order to find the right strategy to teach and help the students in the learning process. The research conducted for 3 days interviewed and 4 days classroom observation, the researcher found that the teachers have used the same strategies which are: 1) Translating words meaning, 2) Course materials matching students' level and learning situation, 3) Giving motivation and 4) Applying various teaching strategies.

Translating words meaning

TWM is a strategy that is often used by the teachers when they are teaches, this is due to the low knowledge or the lack of vocabulary. So, the teacher must translate word by word to make the students understand what material is being explained by the teachers. In this case the teacher uses three languages, namely local language or Sumbawa language, Indonesia and English. In SMPN 2 Plampang the teachers still use local language to teach in grades 7 and 8, this is because students in SMPN 2 Plampang sometimes use Sumbawa language in class or while learning. It can be concluded that in grades 7 and 8, the teacher uses this strategy often. The strategy will only be used when the students do not understand the words meaning of the existing words.

Given the limited exposure to English in rural areas, students frequently have difficulty with vocabulary. Translating words meaning refers to explaining the meanings of words from one language to another, usually to help learners understand new vocabulary in a language they are studying. As stated by the teacher A "I use three languages to explain the material, because the student feels easier when they talk in their local language, even in the class they are rarely used Bahasa Indonesia, so I have to explain using the local language to help them understand the material". For IX grade teacher B said that "I use Bahasa Indonesia to explain the material after

explain in English, in order to make the students understand the material, because I teach grade IX so I rarely use local language to explain, but I do use local language to teach but not as much as when teaching the VII and VIII grade”.

Course materials matching students' level and learning situation

Course materials matching students' level and learning situation refers to designing or selecting educational content that aligns with both the proficiency level of students and the specific context of their learning environment. This means adapting materials to match students' current language abilities or academic skills. For example, the teachers in SMPN 2 Plampang used this strategy because the students have never learned English before so they are still beginners that may need simpler vocabulary and shorter texts, while advanced learners can handle complex grammar and longer readings. Matching the level helps students engage more comfortably with the content without feeling overwhelmed or bored.

In rural schools, access to certain resources may be limited, so materials may need to be adapted to fit these circumstances. The teachers acknowledged that they had made multiple changes to the course plan. According to Teacher A, "the book's content is extremely challenging for students to comprehend." Therefore, learning objectives must be made simpler so that students may understand them more readily. Teacher B also have the same opinion, said that *"I often sought out more curriculum-related sources and material that match the students' level, because the material in the textbook is too high level for them, when I found the material that match the students level it was easier and simpler for me to explain the material to students"*. Teachers should make adjustments until they satisfy the standards that may be utilized in rural schools, particularly in SMPN 2 Plampang, due to the dearth of media that can be used in the teaching and learning process, and most importantly those strategies should be useful for both the teacher and the students.

Giving Motivation

This strategy is the third strategy after TWM and CMMLALS that teachers often use, this is due to the low interest and curiosity of students to learn English, fear of speaking, the lack of support they get, and limited learning facilities. therefore, every day before and after class starts the teacher always motivates students and gives appreciation when they come forward when their name is called, because if they are not called then there will be no students who have the courage to answer. This strategy is often used by 7th and 8th grade teachers.

Based on the interview both of the teachers said that they are always give the students positive words and encouragement them, because it can boost students' confidence, making them feel capable and ready to tackle challenges. In the observation the researcher saw that the teachers motivate the students in the class. This strategy can make the students feel more confidence and encourages them to try new things and participate more actively. Teacher A said that *"The first thing that I do is to motivate the students. So, they can be brave enough to say something in class."*

Applying various teaching strategies

This strategy is a strategy that is not used very often by teachers, usually teachers will try to use various strategies to

find which strategies are good to apply during teaching, in grade 9 teachers often use problem-based learning to teach, this is because the teacher expects students to be more active and willing to discuss with their friends.

Based on the interview the 8-grade teacher had previously tried using blended learning and problem-based learning, but both strategies were deemed inappropriate for grade 8 students due to their low understanding of English, so based on the classroom observation, the teacher currently uses TWM more often. For the grade 7 the teacher, before deciding to use TWM the teacher wanted to try using Flash cards to improve students' vocabulary, but due to inadequate facilities, the school did not have other teaching media besides board books and markers, so the teacher decided to use WTM even though this strategy consumes a lot of time.

The English teachers at SMPN 2 Plampang said that they have tried to use a variety of teaching strategies in the classroom to get the students interested and to help them understand the material, because they need to figure out what strategies they can use to teach the students with all of the difficulties they face. Teacher A said that *"I have tried various strategies like blended learning and problem-based learning to help students actively participates in their own learning process"*. Active engagement increases understanding and retention.

Student's Response to the Strategies That the Teacher Used

For the students interview the researcher use purposive, proportional and stratified sample. The students whom the researcher interview are the students from VIIA female and VIIC male, VIIB male and VIIC Female, and IXA Female and IXC male. The students were chosen based on the most active students and have a better knowledge in English rather than other students.

Based on the interview, the students in SMPN 2 plampang state that they are enjoy learning English when use TWM even it is difficult, they are happy to learn English because they got to learn a new language, as student B said *"I am very happy to learn English, because I can learn a new language, even it is difficult"*. The result of classroom observation also shows the same things, that the students feel more ease and comfortable when the teachers use translating words meaning.

Students can easily understand the teacher's clear explanations of the material, as state by student A *"The teacher explain Bahasa Indonesia and the Explain it again in English"*. Student D also said that *"The material that the teacher explains is really clear and easy to understand"*. The teachers told the students about the meaning of that material in their language or local language. Most of the students' state that they are easy to understand the material when the teachers use translating method, so the based on the students' perspective it is easier for them to understand the material if the teachers use translating words meaning. As stated by students C *"When explaining the material, the teacher explains it in English but after that the teacher told us the meaning of that and using Bahasa Indonesia and Sumbawa to help us understand the material"*. By using that strategy, the students can understand the material well, but it takes a lot of time.

By adjusting Course materials matching students' level and learning situation can help students better understand the material taught, because if directly read from the book students

have difficulty and do not understand the meaning of the material, so the teacher must adjust the material to the level of the students. student E stated *“the teacher asked us to write 10 words each week and the following week discuss the word again”* after teaching 123 and ABC the teacher taught students some basic vocabulary which could help students understand the material in the next class. In classroom observation the researcher can see that the students understand the material when the teachers match the material with their level so it is not be too difficult for the students.

The teacher always makes sure to praise and encourage students before and after class, this is due to the students' low interest in learning English and fear of making mistakes, so the teacher always gives positive words to build students' confidence, so that they dare to come forward when called or dare to answer questions when the teacher asks. According to student D *“before class the teacher always says positive words so that we are enthusiastic about learning.”* The result of the observation also showed the same things, the teachers give positive words towards the students before and after the class, the teacher also praises students when they are brave enough to come forward and answer questions given by the teacher.

The teachers also applying various strategies to meet the standard or the needs of the students, for grade VII they rarely have English class so they are rarely got to practice, the most frequent activity was discussing with their peers, as state by student A *“Sometimes the teacher told us to work in pairs with our seatmate and discuss our homework”*. In VIII grade they do have some game and ice breaking in the class when the students get bored and cannot focus in the class, by doing that the students can be more interest in the class activities. The teachers also used PBL and blended learning before move to TWM. Student D said *“Yes she does, beside using translating words meaning, in my class the teacher use games as the activity in learning process to engage the students and make them not to nervous in the class, help them to relieved they fear”*. Different from grade VII and VIII, in IX grade the teacher is more focused on learning, so instead of games and ice breaking the teacher more often asks students to discuss and presentation by using PBL. Students E said that *“For my class, the teacher use discussion session but so far there is no games in the learning process”*.

Based on the interview, all of the students that have been asked about the teaching strategy are have the same opinion that they are understand when the teacher use translating words meaning strategy, because if the teacher use blended learning, problem-based learning and another strategy it is hard for the students to understand the material, especially students in VII and VIII grade, for students in IX grade maybe problem-based learning is not too difficult for them. Students A said that *“It is really helps, because the teacher explains it with Bahasa Indonesia so we are not confused”*. For VII grade they are understand the material better when the teacher uses daily life example and give them enough time to search a new vocabulary, as state by students B *“Yes I do, it is really help because the teacher gives us a time to search for the vocabulary and it have been explained before so it is not too difficult to understand”*.

Discussion

The teaching strategies used at SMPN 2 Plampang are not actually settled. Because the teachers just follow the flow to teach, so there are no specific reasons or names of strategies

that they used, but based on the results of the interview the researcher wrote down all the teachers have said. Hakim (2015) asserts that teachers provided resources following the syllabus. Teaching and learning at SMPN 2 Plampang, however, runs counter to this idea. Even if there are instructional modules, teachers typically modify and adapt the materials for the students, starting with the most fundamental lesson and making it as short and easy to comprehend as possible. The strategies used to teach English to students at SMPN 2 Plampang, on the other hand, can be divided into three categories: (1) course materials, in which the teachers reset the lesson to basic English in order to accommodate the students' low proficiency level; (2) teaching approach, in which the teacher motivates the students by presenting and explaining the material in three languages, namely English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Sumbawa Language. Interpreting the meaning of words and teaching memorizing techniques; (3) teaching methods, such as delivering a course on basic English concepts like simple vocabulary and inspiring students (Putri et al., 2022).

According to Moulton (2001), an education model designed in the urban context may not always be applicable in the rural setting. So the strategy that can be useful in the urban school may not be used in the rural school. Because the strategies that can be used in urban areas are not always applicable to those in rural areas, based on the researcher's findings, here are the most mentioned ways that the teacher uses to teach the students.

There are four strategies, the first strategy is the strategy of teaching in which the teacher demonstrates and explains the topic, including the three languages of English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Sumbawa Language, for instance, by imparting memorizing skills and translating vocabulary. Siregar et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of translation in bridging language gaps, particularly in contexts where students struggle to grasp foreign languages.

Secondly, the teachers switch the lesson back to Basic English to accommodate the students' low proficiency level, for example, the teachers teach the students from the basic material such as ABC and numbers rather than using the textbook right away. By tailoring the content to the students' abilities, the teachers attempt to create a more accessible learning environment, which is crucial in addressing the disparity between rural and urban education contexts (Moulton, 2001).

The third teachers' strategies include motivating students, this motivational approach helps mitigate students' fear and apprehension about learning a foreign language. The lack of interest and motivation among students is a common challenge in rural areas where exposure to English is minimal (Holguín & Morales, 2016). Examples of this part are the teacher always giving the students motivational words to start the class and the teacher teaching new words or enriching the student's vocabulary by using body language in the learning process.

The last strategy is applying various teaching strategies to find the strategy that can be used. Teachers experiment with various teaching strategies to enhance learning such as Translating words meaning, course matching students' level, giving motivation, applying various teaching strategies, blended-learning, problem-based learning, Role-playing, games, and interactive activities are employed to make lessons more engaging. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has proven

effective for certain classes, particularly for students who demonstrate a higher interest in learning. PBL fosters critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving, aligning with Krashen's (1982) theory that exposure to language slightly above a learner's current level promotes language acquisition. Despite these efforts, the limited resources in rural schools often hinder the implementation of more advanced teaching aids and media.

CONCLUSION

Teachers in SMPN 2 Plampang have tried various teaching strategies to teach English, based on the findings the strategies that the teachers mostly use are translating words meaning, course materials matching students' level and learning situation, giving motivation and applying various teaching strategies. Rural students in Plampang generally have minimal exposure to English outside the classroom, which limits opportunities for practice and reinforcement. The surrounding environment lacks a language-rich atmosphere common in more urbanized areas where students might encounter English in media, signage, or community resources. Consequently, English is perceived as distant and unrelated to daily life, further dampening students' motivation to learn.

After conducting the study, the researcher found that, from the perspective of the students, most of them were able to understand the teacher's content almost completely by using the translation technique. In order to close the gap created by the students' limited vocabulary and lower English proficiency, this approach involved explaining the content in three different languages. This approach took a considerable amount of time to fully explain each concept, even though it was reasonably successful in guaranteeing understanding. Additionally, the study brought to light yet another important problem: the students' lack of enthusiasm and drive for learning English. Their progress was hampered by this lack of enthusiasm, which also posed a constant problem for the teacher.

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