

Teacher's Strategies in Addressing Students' Difficulties in Learning English at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga

Umami Qalsum Arif^{1*}, Yulius Pertama Bang Kelen²⁾, Levin Hermina Sitania³⁾, Chiciesther Morita Beto Piran⁴⁾

^{1,2,3,4} Institut Keguruan dan Teknologi Larantuka, Indonesia

Email: ummiaarif29@gmail.com¹, juliuskelen799@gmail.com², levinherminasitania@gmail.com³, nissapiran23@gmail.com⁴

Correspondence : ummiaarif29@gmail.com*

Abstract: *This study aims to identify the English learning difficulties encountered by seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative research design, this study gathered data through systematic non-participant classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and field notes during the learning process. The findings reveal that seventh-grade students experience complex learning difficulties, including vocabulary limitations, phonological interference from their mother tongue that hinders pronunciation, speaking anxiety, low learning motivation due to a lack of language exposure outside the classroom, and limited learning resources. To overcome these challenges, the teacher implemented integrated strategies encompassing Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) by linking materials to East Flores local wisdom, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), language games, the use of physical gestures and vocal variations as substitutes for digital audio media, and the co-creation of a "Classroom Agreement" to foster a safe classroom culture free from peer ridicule.*

Abstrak : *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan belajar bahasa Inggris yang dihadapi oleh siswa kelas VII di SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga. Menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui observasi kelas non-partisipan secara sistematis, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan guru dan siswa, serta catatan lapangan selama proses pembelajaran. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa siswa kelas VII mengalami kesulitan belajar yang kompleks meliputi keterbatasan kosakata (vocabulary limitation), interferensi fonologis bahasa ibu yang menghambat pelafalan (pronunciation), kecemasan berbicara, rendahnya motivasi belajar akibat minimnya paparan bahasa di lingkungan luar kelas, serta keterbatasan sarana penunjang pembelajaran. Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, guru menerapkan strategi terintegrasi yang mencakup pendekatan Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) dengan mengaitkan materi pada kearifan lokal Flores Timur, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), pemanfaatan permainan bahasa (language games), penggunaan gestur tubuh dan variasi suara guru sebagai pengganti media audio digital, serta penerapan "Kesepakatan Kelas" untuk membangun budaya kelas yang aman dan bebas dari perundungan sejawat.*

Keywords : *Teacher's Strategies, Learning Difficulties, Rural Education, Classroom Agreement, Communicative Learning*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental foundation in shaping high-quality human resources capable of competing in the era of globalization. Through education, individuals are equipped with the knowledge,

skills, and attitudes necessary to adapt and contribute significantly to modern society. One of the most important aspects of 21st-century education is the mastery of foreign languages, particularly English. As an international language, English plays a vital role in global communication, the advancement of science, technology, economy, and diplomacy. Therefore, proficiency in English has become a basic necessity for students to actively participate in an increasingly open and competitive world. As stated by Dijk (2024), language is not merely a means of communication, but also an instrument in shaping power and ideology within society. In the context of globalization, mastery of an international language such as English enables individuals to engage directly in global discourse that determines the direction of developments in science, technology, and the economy.

In the context of education in Indonesia, English is positioned as a compulsory subject taught from junior high school to higher education. This demonstrates the important role of English in the national education curriculum. The government, through various educational policies, continues to strive to improve the quality of English teaching in schools. These efforts include the development of competency-based curricula, improvement of teacher qualifications, and the provision of various learning resources to support the teaching process. This is reinforced by the latest policy from the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education (Mendikdasmen), Abdul Mu'ti, which stipulates that English will be integrated as a compulsory subject starting from Elementary School (SD) and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) across Indonesia beginning in the 2027/2028 academic year. This strategic step aims to establish a foundation of communicative competence from an early age to prepare the younger generation for global competition.

However, in reality, the outcomes of English education in Indonesia remain relatively low compared to several neighboring countries in Southeast Asia. Many Indonesian students, especially at the junior high school level, still face significant difficulties in understanding and using English actively, both orally and in writing. According to Georgakopoulou (2022), language learning should be socially constructed and driven by identity, where learners interact with English not only as an academic subject but also as a means of self-expression and global participation. When this gap occurs, the learning process loses its authentic meaning, and students tend to perceive English as a burdensome and intimidating subject.

Students' difficulties in learning English can be triggered by a complex interaction of internal and external factors. Internal factors include low learning motivation, lack of self-confidence, difficulties in understanding grammar, limited vocabulary, and pronunciation problems. On the other hand, external factors include monotonous teaching methods, limited learning media and facilities, unsupportive learning environments, and minimal opportunities to practice English in daily life. The accumulation of these factors often leads to language anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and a loss of interest in learning

English. Syamsuddin (2021) defines discourse as a sequence of coherent sentences that construct meaning, indicating that language learning must go beyond memorizing vocabulary and grammatical rules. Learning must empower students to express ideas and participate in real communication.

In bridging these difficulties, the role of the teacher is crucial. As facilitators and motivators, teachers are not only responsible for delivering material but also for creating a conducive classroom atmosphere, building effective educational interactions, and adjusting teaching strategies to the unique characteristics of students. Walsh (2021) introduces the concept of interactional competence, emphasizing that teachers must have the skills to manage classroom discourse dynamically, respond to students' spontaneous needs, encourage participation, and provide appropriate language scaffolding. Innovative teaching strategies such as Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Learning, Contextual Teaching and Learning, the integration of language games, and individual guidance are important instruments in minimizing students' learning barriers. Mercer (2020) proposes the concept of dialogic teaching, highlighting the importance of meaningful classroom interaction. For students in resource-limited environments, teacher-guided empathetic dialogue can connect learning materials with real-life experiences, thereby enhancing cognitive understanding while reducing psychological tension.

SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga, as a public educational institution located in a rural area of East Flores Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, faces distinctive sociolinguistic and infrastructural challenges. Based on preliminary observations, most students at this school experience serious difficulties in mastering both receptive and productive English skills, especially listening, speaking, and writing. The lack of exposure to English in family and community environments, the dominance of the Lamaholot local language in daily communication, and limited access to digital media and information technology further exacerbate students' learning barriers. Richards (2022) adds that adaptive expertise is essential for teachers working in environments with highly diverse linguistic and emotional student backgrounds. Teachers must be able to modify their teaching strategies based on direct student feedback and real classroom dynamics.

Despite facing limited facilities, English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga continue to strive for instructional innovation. Burns & Hill (2023) emphasize the importance of reflective teaching, where educators continuously evaluate the effectiveness of their methods and make creative adjustments to respond to students' needs. This aligns with Arifeni's (2024) research on educational discourse in Indonesia, which indicates that teachers often feel burdened by technological demands and rapid policy changes. The study highlights the importance of grounded and context-sensitive teaching strategies, particularly for implementation in rural schools with limited resources.

To understand the dynamics of English language learning in rural areas more comprehensively, contemporary literature from the past five years offers relevant theoretical frameworks. Based on the

CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020), modern English competence is no longer measured solely by grammatical accuracy, but by mediation skills, communicative strategies, and intercultural awareness that enable learners to function in authentic communication situations. The Global Englishes theory developed by Rose and Galloway (2019) and Galloway (2021) views English as a global lingua franca, emphasizing that mastery of the language provides access to global knowledge and cross-cultural collaboration. However, for learners in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, barriers to language skill mastery are often triggered by local sociolinguistic factors. Nation (2020) highlights that limited vocabulary exposure hinders cognitive language processing, while Lightbown and Spada (2021) identify first language (L1) interference as a primary cause of pronunciation and structured writing errors among students. From the perspective of Dynamic Systems Theory (Larsen-Freeman, 2020), learners' language errors are viewed as indicators of a developing dynamic system rather than mere cognitive failure, requiring teachers to provide constructive and non-judgmental feedback.

From a psychological perspective, foreign language anxiety has been proven to be a major barrier to speaking fluency. Teimouri, Goetze, and Plonsky (2019) emphasize that high levels of anxiety block students' working memory, thereby hindering their ability to produce spontaneous speech. Conversely, dynamic and goal-oriented learning motivation (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Al-Hoorie, 2021), as well as supportive teacher-student relationships (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), have been shown to reduce such anxiety. In rural areas with limited technological access, the lack of digital media (Chapelle, 2020; Golonka et al., 2021) can be addressed by strengthening social interaction and cognitive scaffolding based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Lantolf, Poehner, & Thorne, 2020). Teaching strategies such as Communicative Language Teaching (Richards, 2023; Sato & Loewen, 2022), Task-Based Language Teaching (Ellis, 2021; Long, 2022), contextual learning (Widodo, 2021), collaborative group interaction (Dörnyei, 2022), differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2022), and the use of simple media are crucial in remote areas.

Previous studies provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of these strategies. Sari (2021) found that task-based speaking activities and digital visual media increased students' confidence in speaking. Rahman (2022) showed that remedial teaching and formative feedback effectively addressed grammar and vocabulary difficulties caused by first language interference. Putri (2023) highlighted how contextual approaches help students relate English material to daily life, thereby increasing motivation. Furthermore, Hasan (2024) demonstrated that educational games and collaborative group projects significantly enhance student engagement in the classroom. Although these studies provide valuable contributions, research focusing on the dynamics of English teaching in rural East Nusa Tenggara, particularly at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga with its unique sociocultural

characteristics, remains very limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring in depth students' learning difficulties and the actual strategies implemented by teachers at the school.

METHOD

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. This design was chosen because the researcher aimed to describe naturally, in depth, and comprehensively the phenomenon of teachers' strategies in overcoming students' difficulties in learning English without conducting any experimental manipulation on the research subjects. This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga, a public junior high school located in Tanjung Bunga District, East Flores Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. The school is situated in a rural area with relatively challenging road infrastructure access from the regency capital, Larantuka. Based on the institutional profile, SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga has limitations in information technology supporting facilities.

Research Subjects

The main subject of this study was an English teacher teaching Grade VII at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga. The selection of the Grade VII teacher was based on the consideration that Grade VII students are in a crucial transitional phase from elementary school—where most of them have not received structured formal English instruction—to junior high school level. In addition to the teacher, Grade VII students were also involved as supporting subjects to provide confirmation, additional perspectives, and reflections regarding their learning experiences as well as the impact of the strategies implemented by the teacher in the classroom.

Data Collection Techniques

The qualitative data in this study were collected directly by the researcher as the main instrument through two primary techniques:

1. **Direct Classroom Observation:** The researcher acted as a non-participant observer during four meetings of the English learning process in the Grade VII classroom. The observation focused on teacher-student interaction, the way the teacher delivered the material, specific strategies used when students experienced difficulties understanding instructions or vocabulary, the use of body language, classroom management, and students' verbal and non-verbal responses during activities.
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with the English teacher to explore their socio-pedagogical understanding, identification of the most dominant types of students' learning difficulties, the rationale behind selecting certain strategies, the process of establishing classroom agreements, personal challenges encountered, and the independent

solutions undertaken. Interviews were also conducted with five Grade VII students selected purposively to represent different levels of classroom participation, aiming to identify psychological barriers, their perceptions of the teacher's teaching methods, and their comfort during the learning process.

Research Instruments

Supporting instruments used to facilitate data recording in the field included:

1. **Observation Field Notes:** A structured instrument sheet consisting of columns for time of occurrence, description of learning activities, specific behaviors of teachers and students, and the researcher's critical reflections recorded directly in the classroom. The focus of observation included teaching methods, student engagement, classroom psychological atmosphere, and the utilization of local resources.
2. **Interview Guidelines:** A list of flexible open-ended questions used to guide the interviews to remain aligned with the research objectives while being adaptive to spontaneous responses from subjects. The teacher guideline focused on identifying students' difficulties, handling strategies, and method effectiveness. The student guideline focused on personal barriers, motivation, and comfort with the teacher's teaching style.

Research Procedures

This study was conducted through three structured procedural stages:

1. **Preparation Stage:** Included preparing the research proposal, obtaining research permission from the school, developing observation sheets and interview guidelines, and determining the activity schedule in collaboration with the partner teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga.
2. **Data Collection Stage:** Included intensive classroom observations during English lessons, detailed recording of instructional phenomena, conducting in-depth interviews with the teacher and students after learning sessions, audio recording of interviews (with participants' consent), and organizing all raw data transcripts.
3. **Analysis and Reporting Stage:** Included data reduction, presenting data in descriptive narrative and comparative tables, drawing conclusions based on triangulation results, theoretical discussion, and compiling the complete scientific article report.

Triangulation and Data Validity

To minimize researcher subjectivity and ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, two forms of qualitative triangulation were applied:

1. **Source Triangulation:** Comparing data obtained from the English teacher with perspectives provided by Grade VII students to examine the consistency between teaching claims and students' actual experiences.

2. Method Triangulation: Matching verbal interview data regarding strategies claimed by the teacher with actual instructional practices recorded in classroom observation field notes.

Data validity was further strengthened through a member-checking procedure, where interview transcript drafts and preliminary conclusions were reconfirmed with the teacher to ensure no misinterpretation occurred. In addition, the researcher conducted periodic discussions (peer debriefing) with academic colleagues at the Institute of Teacher Training and Technology Larantuka to maintain analytical objectivity.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed interactively and continuously using the qualitative data analysis model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014):

1. Data Reduction: The researcher selected all interview transcripts and field notes, eliminated irrelevant information related to learning difficulties and teacher strategies, and conducted coding based on specific categories (e.g., code “KSL-KOS” for vocabulary difficulties, “STR-CTL” for contextual strategies, and “STR-KK” for classroom agreements).
2. Data Display: The reduced data were systematically presented in flowing narrative text and comparative summary tables to facilitate analysis of cause-effect relationships and identification of instructional patterns used by the teacher.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: The researcher interpreted the data patterns in depth, connected them with current socio-pedagogical theories, formulated final conclusions, and verified them against raw data to ensure their validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of classroom observations, field notes, and in-depth interviews conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga, the researcher identified various forms of English learning difficulties faced by Grade VII students, along with a series of adaptive strategies implemented by the teacher to address them. To provide a comprehensive overview, the findings regarding the types of students’ learning difficulties are presented systematically in Table 1, followed by a detailed description of the teacher’s intervention strategies in Table 2.

Table 1. Identification of English Learning Difficulties of Grade VII Students

No	Type of Learning Difficulty	Observed Indicators in the Classroom	Dominant Causal Factors
1	Vocabulary Limitation	1. Students have difficulty identifying basic classroom objects in English. 2. Often remain silent for a long	Internal: Lack of independent reading habits and low memory retention.

No	Type of Learning Difficulty	Observed Indicators in the Classroom	Dominant Causal Factors
2	L1 Phonological Interference in Pronunciation	time when asked to construct simple phrases.	External: Absence of English reading materials at home and lack of language exposure outside school.
		3. Fully dependent on physical dictionaries or teacher translations.	Internal: Motor habituation of speech organs to local language phonemes from an early age.
		1. Students pronounce English words exactly as they are spelled (e.g., pronouncing silent letters).	External: Lack of native-speaker audio pronunciation models due to limited digital media in the classroom.
3	Speaking Anxiety	2. Strong influence of the local Lamaholot accent on English intonation.	Internal: Fear of being laughed at by peers when making pronunciation or grammatical errors.
		1. Students avoid eye contact with the teacher during Q&A sessions.	External: Classroom culture not yet fully tolerant of language mistakes.
		2. Reluctant to speak voluntarily.	
4	Low Motivation and Active Participation	3. Display nervous gestures (trembling or looking down) when asked to come to the front of the class.	
		1. Students tend to be passive and only take notes from the board.	Internal: Perception that English is not useful for their future in a rural context.
		2. Often feel sleepy or talk in the local language during grammar explanations.	External: Traditional grammar-based teaching methods that are monotonous and lack interaction.
5	Listening Comprehension Barriers		Internal: Slow cognitive processing of unfamiliar auditory input.
		1. Students become confused and unable to respond when instructions are delivered fully in English.	External: Lack of adequate audio equipment (e.g., CD players or speakers) in the school.
		2. Frequently ask the teacher to repeat instructions in Indonesian.	

Table 1 shows that the linguistic barriers experienced by Grade VII students are closely intertwined with psychosocial factors and their rural environmental conditions. Vocabulary limitations serve as the root cause of students' inability to produce utterances, which in turn triggers high levels of speaking anxiety among them. This condition is further exacerbated by the lack of supporting facilities at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga, such as the absence of a language laboratory or projectors in each classroom, requiring teachers to be creative in designing alternative instructional strategies.

Table 2. The strategies using by teacher to overcome students learning difficulties in learning english

No	Strategy Implemented	Description of Instructional Actions in the Classroom	Targeted Difficulties & Resulting Impact
1	Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) based on Local Wisdom	- Using concrete objects around the Tanjung Bunga area (e.g., cashew fruit, coconut, fishing boats) to teach descriptive texts. - Connecting vocabulary with daily activities of the people of East Flores.	- Target: Limited vocabulary and low perception of language usefulness. - Impact: Students understand word meanings more quickly because they are relevant to their real-life context.
2	Use of Language Games	Integrating simple word-guessing games, picture-matching games (flashcards), and small-group competitions conducted regularly.	- Target: Low learning motivation and classroom boredom. - Impact: Learning enthusiasm increases significantly, the classroom atmosphere becomes more relaxed, and student participation becomes active.
3	Use of Body Gestures and Teacher Voice Variation	The teacher uses dramatic facial expressions, body language, and voice modeling when reading English texts aloud.	- Target: Listening barriers due to the absence of digital audio media. - Impact: Helps students construct meaning of foreign utterances visually without constant translation.
4	Implementation of Classroom Agreement	Formulating shared rules with students at the beginning of the semester, such as: "Respect friends who are speaking," and "Do not laugh at friends' pronunciation mistakes."	- Target: Speaking anxiety and fear of peer ridicule. - Impact: Creates a psychologically safe classroom environment, enabling students to be more confident in speaking English.
5	Remedial Guidance and Individual Scaffolding	- Providing special after-class tutoring for students experiencing severe cognitive delays. - Simplifying written assignments into basic sentence structures.	- Target: Competency gaps among students and learning frustration. - Impact: Helps slow learners catch up without feeling inferior.

The dynamics of English language teaching at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga provide a concrete illustration of how a teacher in a remote area must tactically adapt global theoretical approaches to local limitations. Based on observational data, when the teacher taught descriptive text material, he did not use abstract examples from urban or foreign contexts commonly found in standard textbooks. Instead,

the teacher brought real cashew fruit into the classroom and asked students to observe its texture, color, and taste. This CTL approach instantly reduced the psychological distance between students and the foreign language they were learning. Students no longer felt alienated because the object being described was part of their socio-geographical daily life in East Flores. This contextual relevance was proven to significantly enhance students' memory retention of new vocabulary, in line with Widodo (2021), who states that contextual learning provides strong cognitive anchors for long-term memory.

In addition to CTL, the most interesting finding in this study is the effectiveness of implementing a "Classroom Agreement" initiated by the teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga. This initiative is rooted in the Teacher Driving Program in East Flores Regency, which adopts Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy, where schools should function as safe learning gardens that guide children toward the highest level of safety and happiness. In the context of English learning, the collaboratively formulated classroom agreement proved to be a powerful antidote to students' speaking anxiety. During observation, when a Grade VII student hesitantly mispronounced the word "comfortable," the classroom atmosphere became tense. However, instead of laughing, classmates reminded each other of the classroom agreement posted on the wall: "Support each other and do not mock friends' mistakes." This collective response immediately reduced the student's emotional tension.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, the classroom agreement functions as an affective intervention that lowers students' "Affective Filter." When students' affective filter is low because they feel safe from peer ridicule, they become significantly more willing to practice speaking skills orally, even with very limited vocabulary. This supports Mercer and Dörnyei (2020), who argue that establishing a psychologically safe classroom climate is a fundamental prerequisite before cognitive language interventions can be effective. This sense of safety fosters self-confidence and gradually increases students' willingness to communicate in the classroom.

In terms of listening comprehension and instruction delivery, the absence of digital audio equipment forced the teacher to maximize his personal capacity as the primary instructional medium. Following adaptive patterns also found in rural schools in Sumbawa Island, the English teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga consistently used variations in intonation, facial expressions, and highly expressive physical gestures as visual scaffolding. When teaching classroom instructions such as "Please sweep the floor" or "Close the window," the teacher did not immediately translate them into Indonesian. Instead, he accompanied the utterances with dramatic demonstrations of sweeping the floor or closing the window. This rich use of non-verbal communication helped Grade VII students map English meanings directly without relying on literal mental translation. Theoretically, this represents a form of dialogic teaching in a resource-limited environment, where the teacher facilitates interactive dialogue connecting target language with easily understood physical representations.

However, this study also identified structural challenges that limit the long-term effectiveness of these teaching strategies. As stated by Arifeni (2024), rural teachers are often positioned between national curriculum demands that require high technological independence and the reality of limited facilities in the field. At SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga, although the teacher has high motivation to implement Task-Based Language Teaching using digital platforms, limited internet connectivity and low student ownership of devices make this difficult to realize. Geographical factors also affect students' readiness to learn in the morning. Some students must walk long distances along damaged rural roads to reach school, resulting in physical fatigue and reduced concentration during the first lesson.

In response to these challenges, the teacher engages in self-directed professional development. Because formal training opportunities rarely reach the Tanjung Bunga area, the teacher actively participates in district-level English Teacher Working Groups (MGMP) to share locally based teaching modules for East Flores. He also uses personal mobile internet access at night to download alternative teaching materials from official ministry digital platforms. This aligns with the concept of adaptive expertise proposed by Richards (2022), where teaching success in marginal schools is highly dependent on the teacher's ability to continuously learn independently and modify instructional strategies based on students' social, emotional, and material constraints.

Overall, this qualitative analysis shows that English learning barriers at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga cannot be viewed merely as individual cognitive failure in memorizing vocabulary or grammatical rules. Instead, these barriers are the result of dynamic interactions between rural socio-geographical factors, family economic conditions, limited school infrastructure, and students' psychological unfamiliarity with foreign language learning. Through the integration of contextual teaching strategies, communicative methods packaged in language games, physical gesture-based instruction, and classroom conditioning through the "Classroom Agreement," the English teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga has demonstrated that physical limitations of schools can be balanced with pedagogical sensitivity and strong emotional support. This finding emphasizes the importance of shifting English language teaching in rural Indonesia from a rigid cognitive curriculum orientation toward strengthening psychological safety and ensuring material relevance to students' real-life contexts.

CONCLUSION

The English learning difficulties experienced by Grade VII students at SMP Negeri 1 Tanjung Bunga represent a complex phenomenon influenced by limited basic vocabulary, phonological interference from the local Lamaholot dialect, speaking anxiety caused by fear of peer ridicule, and minimal exposure to English in their home environment. These barriers are further exacerbated by the

lack of digital learning facilities in this rural school setting. Despite these infrastructural limitations, the English teacher has been able to adaptively minimize these obstacles through the implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), utilizing East Flores local wisdom, the use of expressive physical gestures as a substitute for audio media, and the design of interactive communicative activities based on language games. In particular, the implementation of a “Classroom Agreement” has proven to be a crucial pillar in lowering students’ affective filter by fostering a classroom culture that is tolerant, supportive, and free from verbal bullying, thereby encouraging speaking confidence and active participation among students. Moving forward, the success of English language teaching in remote schools does not only depend on teachers’ pedagogical creativity in the classroom, but also requires systematic policy intervention from the government in providing equitable digital infrastructure and teacher training that is sensitive to rural socio-geographical characteristics.

REFERENCES

- Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2021). Foreign language motivation research: Dynamic perspectives on learner engagement. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 43(2), 241–259.
- Arifeni, L. H. (2024). Technological demands and policy shifts in rural Indonesian education: A critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Rural Educational Policy*, 12(1), 45–58.
- Burns, A., & Hill, D. (2023). *Reflective teaching in ELT: Continuously adapting to classroom realities*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chapelle, C. A. (2020). *Technology-mediated language learning in diverse contexts*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Chapelle, C. A., & Sauro, S. (Eds.). (2023). *The handbook of technology and second language learning and teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing.
- Dijk, T. A. van. (2024). *Language, power, and ideology in globalized education*. Routledge.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2022). *Group dynamics in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the language learner revisited*. Routledge.
- Ellis, R. (2021). *Task-based language teaching: Theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Galloway, N. (2021). Global Englishes and language teaching: Allying theory with classroom practice. *ELT Journal*, 75(3), 311–322.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2022). Language learning, identity, and social localization: A narrative perspective. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 13(4), 512–530.

- Golonka, E. M., Bowles, A. R., Frank, V. M., Richardson, D. L., & Freynik, S. (2021). Technologies for foreign language learning: A comprehensive review of impact and materials. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 34(3), 190–215.
- Hasan, M. I. (2024). Teachers' strategies in enhancing students' motivation in learning English. *EFL Education and Engagement Journal*, 9(2), 112–128.
- Kukulska-Hulme, A. (2022). Mobile-assisted language learning in rural and under-resourced areas. *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning*, 12(1), 1–15.
- Lantolf, J. P., Poehner, M. E., & Thorne, S. L. (2020). Sociocultural theory and the pedagogical imperative of L2 education. *Language Teaching*, 53(1), 1–21.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2020). *Complex systems and applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2021). *How languages are learned* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Long, M. H. (2022). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mercer, S. (2020). *Dialogic teaching and interaction in under-resourced classrooms*. Multilingual Matters.
- Mercer, S., & Dörnyei, Z. (2020). *Engaging language learners in contemporary classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2020). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Putri, R. A. (2023). Contextualized English learning to overcome students' learning difficulties. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 8(1), 67–82.
- Rahman, T. (2022). An analysis of students' difficulties in English grammar and vocabulary learning. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 14(3), 205–221.
- Richards, J. C. (2022). *Teacher professional development in language teaching: Adaptive expertise in diverse settings*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (2023). *Communicative language teaching today: Exploring meaning and context*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2019). *Global Englishes for language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sari, D. N., & Hamuddin, B. (2021). Phonological transfer and pronunciation errors among local dialect speakers in Indonesia. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literature*, 6(2), 143–158.
- Sari, F. (2021). Teachers' instructional strategies in enhancing students' speaking skills at junior high school. *Indonesian Journal of English e-Teaching*, 16(2), 89–104.
- Sato, M., & Loewen, S. (2022). *Evidence-based second language pedagogy: Communicative and interactive approaches*. Routledge.
- Syamsuddin, A. R. (2021). *Discourse analysis and English education in secondary schools*. Alfabeta.

- Teimouri, Y., Goetze, J., & Plonsky, L. (2019). Second language anxiety and willingness to communicate: A meta-analysis. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(4), 812–835.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2022). *How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms* (3rd ed.). ASCD.
- Walsh, S. (2021). *Classroom discourse and teacher talk: Developing interactional competence*. Edinburgh University Press.