Exploring English Teaching Strategies: A Case Study at SMPN 2 Mori Atas

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Abstract: This research aims to investigate the teaching strategies employed by English teachers at SMPN 2 Mori Atas. Using a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the teacher used three primary teaching strategies: direct instruction, small group work, and role play. Among these, direct instruction was the most frequently implemented. The study highlights the importance of selecting strategies that are both engaging and suited to students' needs to enhance learning outcomes. These results contribute to a better understanding of how strategic teaching practices influence English language instruction at the junior high school level.
Keywords; *Exploring, English Teaching Strategies, Junior High School*

1.   INTRODUCTION

The process of teaching and learning in the classroom is a determining factor in student academic achievement. According to Djamarah & Zain (2010), teachers must apply strategies that align with both the chosen methods and the way instructional materials are delivered. In English language teaching, which can be challenging for many students, effective strategies are essential to increase motivation, understanding, and student engagement.

Teachers are required not only to convey materials but also to play dual roles: as educators and facilitators of student growth (Aswan, 2010). A teacher who lacks creativity in developing strategies may hinder students' enthusiasm and limit their potential. Therefore, strategic teaching is essential to ensure learning outcomes are achieved, especially when students are not reaching the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM).

Teaching strategies also require teachers to understand student characteristics and learning styles. According to Brown (2007), strategies are specific methods of approaching a task, designed to achieve a particular educational end. Choosing appropriate strategies fosters a more dynamic and student-centered learning environment.

Furthermore, the 2013 Curriculum (K13) in Indonesia emphasizes a student-centered learning approach, where students are encouraged to be active, creative, and independent learners. This requires teachers to employ strategies that are not only innovative but also tailored to the needs of their students. According to Majid (2016), a teaching strategy should consist of a structured plan of learning activities designed to achieve instructional goals effectively.

In an interview with the English teacher at SMPN 2 Mori Atas, the teacher explained that students in class 7B had varied proficiency levels, and many lacked confidences in speaking English. Therefore, the teacher consciously selected strategies that not only emphasized understanding of vocabulary and structure but also encouraged active student participation. For example, the teacher noted, "When I use group work or role play, students seem more excited. They don't realize they are practicing English because it's fun for them."

Therefore, this study aims to **describe the teaching strategies** employed by the English teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Mori Atas in classroom instruction. By identifying and analysing the specific approaches used, the research seeks to provide insights into how these strategies support student engagement, comprehension, and participation in English language learning.

2.   METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach (Tohirin, 2013). According to Creswell (2014), a research design involves procedures for collecting, analysing, and reporting data. This approach is suitable for describing and analysing teacher strategies in depth.

The role of the researcher was as a full observer during the research process, actively observing classroom interactions, interviewing the teacher, and collecting supporting documentation. The research was conducted in May 2024 at SMP Negeri 2 Mori Atas, located in Saemba Village, Mori Atas District, North Morowali Regency.

The main data source was the English teacher of Class 7B. Data collection techniques included: Observation: Conducted twice (May 16 and 23, 2024), to observe how strategies were applied during class. Interview: Conducted with the teacher to understand the rationale behind strategy selection. Documentation: Included lesson plans and photos of classroom activities. Data were analysed using Miles et al. (2014)'s model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation was used to ensure validity (Sugiyono, 2011).

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from observations and interviews indicate that the English teacher at SMPN 2 Mori Atas employed three main teaching strategies: direct instruction, small group work, and role play. These strategies were observed during classroom interactions and further confirmed through an in-depth interview with the teacher.

3.1 The result from Observation

Table 1
The result of 1st and 2nd Observation

Date	Strategy Used	Activities Observed
May 16, 2024	Direct Instruction	Listening to audio, worksheet completion, conversation practice
	Small Group Work	Students worked in pairs to create simple English dialogues
	Role Play	Students performed their dialogues in front of the class
May 23, 2024	Direct Instruction	Teacher introduced new topic, guided vocabulary task, and provided feedback

1. Direct Instruction

This strategy was the most frequently observed during both classroom observations. The teacher began lessons by introducing new material, setting clear objectives, and providing structured explanations using audio and visual resources. As the teacher stated in the interview, "I always begin with clear instructions because students need to know exactly what they're expected to do."

The teacher guided students through examples and exercises, offered help during challenging parts of the task, and ensured students completed independent practice. This aligns with Killen's (1998) model of direct instruction, which includes five phases: introduction, presentation, guided practice, independent practice, and feedback.

2. Small Group Work

The teacher often divided students into pairs or small groups for collaborative tasks. During these sessions, students were asked to create simple conversations or work on activity sheets together. As described in the interview, the teacher explained: "I group them so they can help each other. Some students are shy or weak in vocabulary, but when they work with peers, they gain confidence."

The strategy encouraged student interaction, critical thinking, and peer learning. The teacher monitored the groups and facilitated discussions, supporting Killen's (1998) emphasis on cooperative learning.

3. Role Play

Role play was used in conjunction with group work. After completing conversations in small groups, students were invited to perform them in front of the class. This strategy helped improve speaking skills, pronunciation, and confidence. According to the teacher, "When they act out the scenes, they remember better, and they enjoy the learning process." This practice reflects Killen's recommendation that role play can help students internalize language through performance and context-based use.

3.2 The result from Interview

The interview provided deeper insight into the teacher's rationale behind using these strategies. The teacher emphasized adapting methods to suit students' interests and language proficiency levels. When asked about the biggest challenge, the teacher responded: "Some students are very passive. So, I use more interactive strategies like group work and role play to make them active."

The teacher also mentioned that classroom management and time allocation were factors influencing the choice of strategy: "Direct instruction is good to keep students focused, especially in a short class. But for review or speaking practice, I prefer group work."

The findings suggest that a blend of teacher-cantered and student-cantered strategies can effectively support English language instruction in junior high school settings. Direct instruction provides structure, while small group work and role play foster engagement and communication. Compared to studies by Hayati (2021) and Mustika (2021), the strategies used at SMPN 2 Mori Atas are consistent with practices observed in other Indonesian junior high schools. However, what stands out in this study is the intentional adaptation of strategy to suit class needs and student responses, as highlighted during the teacher interview.

These results reinforce the importance of reflective practice in teaching—teachers who adapt their methods based on classroom dynamics can significantly improve student participation and learning outcomes

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that English teachers at SMPN 2 Mori Atas use a mix of direct instruction, small group work, and role play. Direct instruction is dominant due to its clarity and structured nature. Combining strategies helps engage students and supports varied learning objectives. Teachers' ability to apply multiple strategies based on lesson content and class conditions is crucial to effective English instruction.

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