

THE ENGLISH TEACHER'S STRATEGIES IN CREATING ACTIVE CLASS

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Abstract

This study investigates English teachers' strategies for creating active and engaging classes at MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu with Grade VIII students as the subject. The research aims to identify the most frequently employed strategies, evaluate their effectiveness in promoting student participation and learning outcomes, and describe challenges teachers face when implementing these strategies. A mixed-methods approach was applied: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with four English teachers, and a questionnaire administered to 80 Grade VIII students. Findings indicate that interactive techniques (pair and group work), communicative tasks, use of multimedia, and formative feedback are the most commonly used strategies and are associated with higher levels of student engagement. Constraints included limited resources, class size, and varying student motivation. The study concludes with practical recommendations for teachers and school policymakers to foster more active English classrooms in junior high schools.

Keywords: *active learning, English teacher strategies, junior high, classroom engagement, MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu*

I. Introduction

An active classroom is characterized by students' frequent participation, meaningful interactions, and sustained cognitive engagement. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia, teachers play a pivotal role in designing classroom activities and creating a learning environment that motivates students to speak, collaborate, and practice language skills. MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu, like many junior high schools in Indonesia, faces the dual challenge of meeting national curriculum goals while making lessons interactive for Grade VIII students who have diverse proficiency levels and learning motivations.

Previous studies emphasize that well-designed active learning approaches can significantly boost engagement and language acquisition (Devira, 2023; Solikhah & Sofi, 2023). Furthermore, incorporating strategies such as flipped learning, differentiated instruction, and communicative tasks has proven effective in similar contexts (Astuti Purnamaningwulan & Purwanto, 2025; Fassya et al., 2025).

This research explores English teachers' strategies used to create active classes at MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu. The aims are threefold: (1) to catalogue the strategies teachers use, (2) to evaluate how those strategies affect student engagement and learning, and (3) to identify obstacles teachers encounter and recommend practical solutions.

Active learning and student-centered pedagogies have been widely advocated in language education literature. Research shows that communicative language teaching, task-based learning, collaborative learning, and technology-enhanced instruction can improve student participation and language proficiency (Khadijah, 2019; Mbani et al., 2025). Teachers' instructional choices, classroom management, and feedback practices significantly influence how actively students engage in language tasks. However, implementing active strategies in EFL contexts often encounters constraints such as large class sizes, limited teaching materials, and assessment pressures (Prastiyowati et al., 2025). Studies conducted in similar Indonesian contexts indicate that teacher enthusiasm, the integration of culturally relevant materials, and well-scaffolded pair/group tasks lead to improved student participation (Solikhah & Sofi, 2023).

Formative assessment and immediate corrective feedback have also been linked with greater willingness to take linguistic risks and increased output (Hartanto & Wijaya, 2023).

The questions of this research are: 1) What strategies do English teachers at MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu use to create active classes for Grade VIII students? 2) How effective are these strategies in promoting student participation and learning outcomes? 3) What challenges do teachers face in implementing active learning strategies, and how can these be mitigated?

II. Methodology

A mixed-methods design combined quantitative survey data from students and qualitative data from classroom observations and teacher interviews. This triangulation allowed the researcher to identify not only which strategies were used but also how students perceived their effectiveness. Participants consisted of 2 English teachers at MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu and eighty Grade VIII students selected through convenience sampling across the three Grade VIII classes. Data were collected through: 1) Classroom observations (12 lessons observed, 3 per teacher) using an observation checklist focused on interaction patterns, activity types, and teacher moves; 2) Semi-structured interviews with each of the four English teachers, exploring their rationale for chosen strategies, perceived successes, and encountered barriers; 3) A student questionnaire (structured Likert-scale and short open-ended items) measuring perceptions of engagement, enjoyment, and perceived learning. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed descriptively (means, frequencies). Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis: coding transcripts, identifying recurring themes, and triangulating across data sources to validate findings.

III. Findings and Discussion

A. Findings

Overview of Employed Strategies

Data analysis revealed several recurring strategies used by English teachers to stimulate an active classroom:

Teachers at MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu implemented a variety of strategies aimed at fostering active learning and student participation in English classrooms. One of the most prominent approaches was the consistent use of pair and group work, in which students were encouraged to collaborate during speaking activities, role-plays, and information-gap tasks. These collaborative structures not only increased student talk time but also reduced the anxiety of performing individually, as learners could rely on peer support when practicing language (Khadijah, 2019). Such arrangements helped to build a classroom environment where interaction and cooperation became routine parts of the learning process.

Complementing this, teachers also employed task-based activities designed to provide students with authentic communicative purposes. Activities such as problem-solving discussions, role simulations, and information-gap exchanges gave learners opportunities to use the target language meaningfully, rather than relying solely on rote memorization or mechanical drills (Li & Smith, 2019). These tasks required students to negotiate meaning and produce language output, both of which are essential elements in second language acquisition.

To further engage students and make lessons more dynamic, teachers integrated multimedia and visual resources, including images, short video clips, PowerPoint slides, and audio recordings. These materials made abstract language concepts more concrete and relatable while simultaneously sparking discussion and curiosity (Fauzi & Nurhayati, 2022). For example, a short video could serve as a stimulus for group discussion, or a set of pictures could be used for storytelling activities, thereby providing diverse entry points into the lesson for learners with different learning styles.

Another important strategy observed was scaffolding and chunking. Teachers frequently divided lessons into smaller, more manageable steps and modeled language use before asking students to perform independently. Sentence frames and guided practice activities provided additional support for lower-proficiency students, enabling them to participate more confidently in communicative tasks (Kurniawan, 2020). By gradually reducing this support, teachers encouraged learners to take greater responsibility for their own language production,

thus promoting autonomy and sustained engagement.

Equally significant was the use of formative feedback. Teachers often provided immediate corrective feedback during classroom activities, ensuring that errors were addressed without discouraging students' willingness to communicate. Feedback was balanced with positive reinforcement, which helped maintain fluency and motivated students to continue participating actively (Hartanto & Wijaya, 2023). This approach reflected a student-centered orientation, where mistakes were treated as learning opportunities rather than failures.

Finally, teachers occasionally incorporated gamification elements such as point systems, group competitions, and timed challenges. These simple yet effective techniques were particularly useful for boosting student motivation and energy levels, especially in larger classes where sustaining attention was more challenging (Hasanah, 2024). By framing learning activities as games, teachers transformed potentially monotonous drills into enjoyable experiences that encouraged participation from even the more reluctant learners.

Together, these strategies demonstrated a deliberate effort by teachers to design engaging, student-centered lessons despite contextual challenges. The combination of collaborative learning, authentic tasks, multimedia integration, scaffolding, constructive feedback, and gamification created a more interactive classroom atmosphere where Grade VIII students were not only encouraged but also supported in becoming active participants in their English learning process.

Student Perceptions of Effectiveness

The student questionnaire showed positive responses to interactive activities. On a 5-point Likert scale, the mean scores were highest for statements related to enjoyment of group work ($M = 4.1$) and perceived opportunity to practice speaking in class ($M = 3.9$). Lower mean scores were found for items about access to technology and the availability of learning resources ($M = 2.7$).

Open-ended student responses highlighted that collaborative tasks made class more enjoyable and reduced anxiety when speaking in front of the whole class (Yulianti & Hidayat, 2024). Several students noted that

teacher modeling and sentence starters helped them participate more confidently.

Observation and Interview Insights

Observation notes corroborated questionnaire results: lessons with structured pair/group tasks exhibited more student talk time and higher on-task behavior. Teacher interviews revealed that instructors intentionally designed activities to prioritize communication and confidence-building. However, teachers also reported several constraints: limited classroom technology, large class sizes (30–36 students), and time constraints within the curriculum schedule that sometimes forced teacher-centered instruction for efficiency (Ramadhan, 2022).

B. Discussion

The findings align with broader EFL literature that indicates interactive, communicative strategies foster greater student engagement (Allen & Brown, 2021). Pair and group work emerged as the backbone of active classrooms in this study, consistent with the idea that peer interaction creates more opportunities for output and language negotiation (Putra & Sari, 2021). Task-based activities offered authentic purposes for language use, which motivated students to communicate rather than merely memorize rules (Ardi & Putri, 2019). Use of multimedia and visuals supported comprehension and sparked discussion, especially among lower-proficiency learners (Fauzi & Nurhayati, 2022). Scaffolding strategies—such as modeling, sentence frames, and stepwise task breakdown—enabled more students to join activities confidently, reducing the affective filter (Kurniawan, 2020). Formative feedback practices were crucial: teachers who balanced correction and positive reinforcement sustained student willingness to take communicative risks (Hartanto & Wijaya, 2023).

Challenges such as large classes and limited resources are not unique to MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu. These constraints sometimes necessitated teacher-centered approaches to maintain discipline and meet syllabus requirements (Santoso & Dewi, 2020). Nonetheless, even within constrained settings, teachers successfully employed low-cost, high-impact strategies (e.g., think–pair–share, jigsaw tasks, role-plays) to activate student participation (Hasanah, 2024).

The study underscores the importance of professional development focused on classroom management techniques tailored for interactive activities and on low-tech strategies that scale in larger classes (Prastiyowati et al., 2025). Administrative support—providing periodic access to multimedia resources and allowing flexible scheduling for communicative assessments—could further enhance teachers' capacity to implement active strategies.

IV. Conclusion

English teachers at MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu employ a range of strategies to create active classes for Grade VIII students, including pair/group work, task-based learning, multimedia use, scaffolding, and formative feedback. These strategies are associated with higher student engagement and perceived opportunities to practice English. Barriers such as limited resources and large class sizes hinder full implementation, but teachers adapt by using pragmatic, low-cost methods. The study recommends targeted teacher training, improved resource allocation, and curriculum flexibility to support sustained interactive practice.

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