



Reflections on The Challenges and Opportunities Prior to Digital Transformation: English Teacher Competence at SMPN 2 Mootilango

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Abstract

This study evaluates the proficiency of english teachers at SMPN 2 Mootilango before digital transformation, with the objective of identifying issues in pedagogical methods, classroom management, and the utilization of instructional media. A qualitative case study approach was utilized to collect data via classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The findings demonstrate that teacher-centered instruction, dependence on rote memorization, and inadequate classroom management practices substantially impeded student involvement and language acquisition. Moreover, inadequate instructional resources and insufficient professional development opportunities hindered pedagogical creativity. These findings highlight the imperative for adaptive professional development programs that furnish educators with varied techniques, irrespective of technological accessibility.

Keywords

Teacher competence, English Language learning, teaching methodology, classroom management, digital education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengevaluasi kemahiran guru bahasa Inggris di SMPN 2 Mootilango sebelum transformasi digital, dengan tujuan mengidentifikasi masalah dalam metode pedagogis, manajemen kelas, dan pemanfaatan media instruksional. Pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pengajaran yang berpusat pada guru, ketergantungan pada hafalan, dan praktik manajemen kelas yang tidak memadai secara substansial menghambat keterlibatan siswa dan pemerolehan bahasa. Selain itu, sumber daya instruksional yang tidak memadai dan peluang pengembangan profesional yang tidak memadai menghambat kreativitas pedagogis. Temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya program pengembangan profesional adaptif yang memberi pendidik berbagai teknik, terlepas dari aksesibilitas teknologi.

Kata Kunci

Kompetensi guru, pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, metodologi pengajaran, manajemen kelas, pendidikan digital

Introduction

The competency of English teachers is crucial in determining students success in developing language abilities. Effective English language instruction relies on teaching competence,



classroom management techniques, and the utilization of technological tools for teaching. In underdeveloped nations such as Indonesia, English educators frequently encounter structural and pedagogical challenges, especially in traditional educational environments where conventional teaching methodologies prevail. Historically, education in these environments has been defined by teacher-centered techniques, and they were primarily dependent on face to face interactions, textbooks, and rote memorization. Although these methods offer structured instruction, they frequently limit student participation, critical thinking, and chances for interactive learning. The absence of varied educational resources and innovative teaching methods further limits pedagogical effectiveness, which is particularly in resource-constrained settings such as SMPN 2 Mootilango. The advent of digital learning methods has transformed education, enhancing student involvement and interactivity via multimedia, interactive platforms, and online discussions (Hendriks, 2016). Notwithstanding these improvements, English educators at SMPN 2 Mootilango continuously face significant barriers in creating interactive and communicative learning environments, attributable to restricted access to professional development opportunities and instructional resources. This dependence on conventional, teacher-centered approaches has led to passive learning experiences for students, which negatively impact their language skills, motivation, and level of involvement in English acquisition.

Prior research investigations have emphasized the essential role of teacher competence in influencing learning outcomes. Stronge (2018) asserts that teachers' competence in classroom management, the application of engaging pedagogical tactics, and the providing of structured feedback is directly linked to student success. Muma and Kalam (2021) emphasize the significance of recognizing various learning styles—auditory, visual, and kinesthetic—to customize instruction and foster inclusive educational settings. However, before the widespread integration of digital tools in education, many teachers—especially in underresourced schools—lacked access to innovative teaching methodologies and professional training programs. As a result, instruction remained predominantly textbookbased, with minimal use of audiovisual aids or interactive pedagogies. It is similar with the statement of Ambrose et al. (2020) who stated about challenge teacher-centered approaches. He said that they restrict the developing of critical thinking and communication skills, and promote active learning tactics such as problem-based learning and flipped classrooms. Zierer's (2017) research suggests that participatory teaching methods like dramatic reenactments and collaborative exercises serve as effective bridges between academic learning and authentic communication contexts, promoting both learner motivation and proficiency gains. Moreover, Johnson (2022) recognizes classroom management as a continual challenge in non-digital settings, especially with disciplinary matters, student participation, and varied learning. In environments with limited resources such as SMPN 2 Mootilango, these issues are intensified by inadequate access to professional development, leading to decreased effectiveness of teaching and student learning outcomes.

Method

The objective of this study is to assess the English teacher's proficiency in SMPN 2 Mootilango prior to the digital transformation. The research methodology is intended to offer a thorough comprehension of the obstacles encountered by teachers in a pre-digital learning environment,



as well as to pinpoint potential strategies for enhancement. To this end, the study employed a purposive sampling technique to identify teachers with a minimum of five years of teaching experience. This criterion guaranteed that the study would obtain valuable insights from educators who had successfully adjusted to non-digital teaching conditions over an extended period. Twenty students and five English teachers participated in the study. The teachers who were chosen had a variety of teaching styles, years of experience, and familiarity with instructional media, which enabled them to offer a diverse perspective on pedagogical challenges. In the meantime, the students who participated, who were selected from a variety of grade levels, provided insights into the ways in which pre-digital teaching methods impacted their learning experiences.

Result and Discussion

Result

This chapter presents the findings of the study on English teacher competence at SMPN 2 Mootilango prior to the digital transformation. The results are organized into several sub-sections that systematically describe the processed data, highlighting key aspects of teaching methodologies, classroom management, and the use of instructional media. The findings are presented in a narrative format, supported by tables and figures where appropriate, to enhance clarity and understanding.

1. Teacher-Centered Instruction is The Predominant Method

The research determined that teacher-centered instruction continued to be the predominant teaching method at SMPN 2 Mootilango. Teachers' reliance on lectures and rote memorization was evident, while interactive teaching methods such as role-playing and discussions were infrequently employed. This approach resulted in a lack of communicative practice in English and limited student engagement. The frequency of various instructional methods observed in classrooms is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency of Teaching Methods Employed

Teaching Method	Frequency (%)
Lecture & Memorization	75%
Group Discussion	10%
Language Games	5%
RolePlaying	5%
Visual Media Usage	5%

2. Student Engagement and Classroom Management

One of the primary obstacles that was identified was the low level of student engagement in English lessons. Teachers prioritized corrective feedback over encouraging students to communicate, which resulted in a less interactive classroom environment, which further reinforced students' passive learning habits. Many students were apprehensive about speaking English due to the fear of making mistakes. The level of student participation in various learning activities is illustrated in table 2.

Table 2
 Student Engagement in Educational Activities

Learning Activity	High Participation (%)	Low Participation (%)
Speaking Activities	25%	75%
Group Work	30%	70%
Individual Tasks	60%	40%
Listening Exercises	50%	50%

The data suggests that lecture-based teaching and memorization were the primary teaching methods in the classrooms, while interactive methods were significantly underutilized.

3. Instructional Media Utilization is Restricted

The interviews revealed that teachers primarily relied on textbooks and blackboards, with minimal use of supplementary learning materials such as images, audio, or videos. Despite the potential benefits of using instructional media, teachers' implementation was impeded by a lack of training and limited access to resources. A rigid curriculum structure further restricted teachers' ability to develop more innovative teaching approaches. The lack of professional training for English teachers further impeded the adoption of interactive teaching methods. The utilization of various instructional media categories is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3
 Instructional Media Utilized in English Classrooms

Instructional Media	Usage Frequency (%)
Textbooks & Blackboard	85%
Flashcards/Posters	10%
Audio/Listening Tools	3%
VideoBased Learning	2%

The data indicated that teachers predominantly employed textbooks and blackboards, with only a minimal integration of visual or audio materials.

4. Institutional Obstacles to Teacher Development

The study identified a number of institutional constraints that impeded the enhancement of English instruction.

- 1) Limited professional development opportunities - Teachers reported that there were minimal training sessions on modern and communicative teaching techniques.
- 2) The national curriculum imposed stringent curriculum requirements, which limited the ability of teachers to modify lessons in accordance with the needs of their students.
- 3) Large class sizes – The opportunities for individual interaction and participation were restricted by the overcrowded classrooms

Discussion

This section interprets the findings of English teacher competence at SMPN 2 Mootilango before digital transformation, linking them to relevant literature and discussing their implications. The discussion highlights key challenges related to teaching methodologies, classroom management, instructional media use, and institutional constraints, while also proposing potential strategies for improvement.

1. Effects of Teacher-Centered Instruction on Student Proficiency

Previous research has demonstrated that teacher-centered teaching approaches are less effective in enhancing students' language proficiency. Teacher-centered learning limits the development of critical thinking and communication skills (Ambrose dkk. (2020). Interactive teaching strategies have been shown to be more effective in enhancing students' speaking and comprehension skills than traditional text-based learning. Consequently, in order to enhance English language acquisition, educators should implement a diverse array of communicative teaching methods, including role-playing, peer discussion, and problem-based learning, which have been demonstrated to enhance language proficiency through authentic and engaging practice (Zierer et al., 2017).

2. Challenges in Student Engagement and Classroom Management

The results of this study demonstrated that students were extremely hesitant to engage in speaking activities, with 75% demonstrating low engagement. Classroom observations suggested that teachers relied on corrective feedback rather than encouragement, which resulted in increased student anxiety and disengagement. The low student participation and reliance on punitive discipline observed in this study are consistent with the findings of Zierer, 2017; Ambrose et al., 2020 who argued lecture-heavy or passive learning methods, significantly limit students' opportunities to develop essential skills. Strict disciplinary measures can create an environment of anxiety among students, causing them to delay participating in classroom discussions due to the fear of negative feedback Holt et al. (2022) In order to cultivate a more supportive learning environment, it is recommended that positive reinforcement and motivational teaching strategies be implemented. Muma and Kalam (2021) emphasize the importance of teacher recognizing different learning styles, — auditory, visual, and kinesthetic—to customize instruction and foster inclusive educational settings.

3. The Importance of Instructional Media in The Effectiveness of Teaching

The study revealed that teachers at SMPN 2 Mootilango primarily utilized textbooks and blackboards (85%), with minimal use of visual or audio materials. The absence of digital or interactive tools significantly limited students' exposure to authentic language use. This lack of instructional media use and resource limitation impede effective language teaching. Nevertheless, studies suggest that teachers can enhance lessons by incorporating physical teaching aids such as flashcards, storytelling, and role-playing exercises, even in non-digital environments. Involvement and interactivity via multimedia, interactive platforms, and online discussions can be an active learning medium in the classroom as well as outside the classroom (Hendriks, 2016)

4. Teacher Training Requirements and Institutional Obstacles

The study underscores the pressing necessity of structured professional development programs to enhance the competence of English teachers. A significant number of educators reported that they had limited opportunities to participate in training sessions, which made it difficult for them to adopt innovative and student-centered teaching strategies. In the absence of continuous professional development, teachers encountered difficulties in

integrating contemporary pedagogical approaches, which are crucial for improving student engagement and language skill.

The national curriculum's rigidity, which strictly prioritized textbook-based instruction, was another significant constraint. This restrictive framework left teachers with limited flexibility to adapt lessons to the needs of their students. Consequently, teachers were frequently compelled to prioritize syllabus completion over interactive and communicative learning, thereby restricting their capacity to establish a dynamic and responsive classroom environment.

Additionally, the challenges faced by teachers were further exacerbated by the issue of large class sizes. The overcrowded classrooms restricted opportunities for individualized instruction, making it difficult for teachers to provide targeted support to students struggling with language acquisition. Teachers found it challenging to differentiate instruction, often resulting in unequal learning experiences where high-achieving students thrived, while weaker students were left behind. These institutional challenges collectively impeded efforts to enhance the quality of English instruction, underscoring the need for greater flexibility in curriculum implementation, improved teacher training programs, and policies that address class size limitations. Schools should restructure teacher training programs to address these challenges, including the incorporation of seminars, peer-led mentoring, and exposure to innovative teaching strategies, even in low-resource environments.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the English teacher competence at SMPN 2 Mootilango was constrained by traditional teaching methods, limited instructional media, and institutional barriers prior to the digital transformation. These results underscore the urgent need for more adaptive teaching strategies and professional development programs to improve language instruction. Although digital transformation presents new opportunities, effective pedagogy should not rely solely on technology; it should also incorporate interactive, student-centered approaches that can be implemented in any learning experience.

In the future, it is imperative to prioritize curriculum flexibility and structured teacher training programs to guarantee that educators possess both digital and non-digital teaching competencies. Future research should investigate comparative studies between pre-digital and post-digital learning, as well as scalable strategies for enhancing English instruction in resource-limited schools to establish more inclusive and effective educational systems

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