

# Well-designed teaching strategies in involving students in learning English

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## ABSTRACT

Students' involvement is essential in learning, as it fosters active participation and serves as a key indicator of success in classroom learning. This study aimed to explore the strategies applied by an experienced English teacher and identify the most effective approaches for enhancing student engagement in a private senior high school in Malang. A qualitative case study approach was employed, applying Miles and Huberman's data analysis model. Data were collected through non-participative observation, structured interviews, and field notes. The findings revealed that the teacher implemented five main strategies: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), pronunciation practice within a modified CLT approach, cross-linguistic transfer and language games. It was recognized that these strategies fostered interaction, collaboration, and engagement, effectively increasing student involvement—especially among students with lower proficiency or special needs. However, interview data highlighted cross-linguistic transfer and language games as the most effective strategies from the teacher's perspective. These findings suggest that while classroom dynamics support student engagement through structured activities, the teacher perceives linguistic transfer and interactive games as more impactful for student participation. This study underscores the importance of combining multiple instructional strategies to enhance student involvement in English language learning and highlights the value of using multiple data sources to gain a more comprehensive understanding of teaching effectiveness.

Keywords: English Learning; Students' involvement; Teaching strategies

## INTRODUCTION

Students' involvement is essential in learning as it is the process of becoming active students. Making the students involving in learning English is required as is one of the determinant factors to measure the students' success in classroom learning

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(Arifani & Suryanti, 2019; Harmanto et al, 2023). However, it does not mean that the students are fully active in learning. That is the reason that the teacher's roles and presence are important to introduce the students to the concept of involvement in learning as well as to promote strategies to foster learner autonomy (Adi et al., 2021; Yuzulia, 2020). Therefore, it is important for the teachers to have strategy to involve the students in learning.

Involving the students in learning is part of teachers' creativity in educational setting especially on Senior High School level as the students still rely on their teacher in teaching learning English and teaching and learning on teachers' creativity is importance of creativity in teaching and learning on teachers' creativity and teacher's creativity has positive effect on teaching and learning process and learning outcomes (Derakhsan et al., 2020; Khodabakhshzadeh et al., 2018; Zhi & Wang, 2023). Strategy is needed to apply by teachers to reduce anxiety (Aini et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2024), and teachers need to be equipped by strategies in teaching in order to help the students to cope with the difficulties in learning English (Metruk & Kováčová, 2025; Nurdianingsih, 2021) and also applying learning strategies is one solution for increasing students' motivation (Al Ghifarah & Pusparini, 2023; Muna et al., 2024) Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the teachers' strategy in teaching English as many advantages of it.

Dealing with strategy in involving the students in learning English, there are several researches done. One of them is revealing the impact of engagement in out-of-class learning on foreign language students' language proficiency. The results show that the most frequent activities in which English is practiced are entertaining activities like watching movies, videos, and surfing on the Internet, and that the level of the students' involvement in English language activities outside the classroom is positively associated with their language proficiency (Acosta- Marzano & Mercer, 2024; Bala, 2020; Nurjanah, 2023).

The next research is to study the classroom interaction process in an online learning context in which English is learned as a foreign language. The result of the analysis is that most teachers use synchronous and asynchronous online classroom interaction and blended learning in which teacher-student, student-student, student-teacher, and student-learning sources are met through discussion. This strategy is mostly preferred by teachers to give students a chance to get involved in communication, collaboration, interaction, and participation. This strategy is believed to be able to engage students in developing language learning opportunities; therefore, this can be a good model for better classroom practices (Kusuma & Syam, 2022).

The other research is to determine the most effective strategy for involving students in the teaching and learning process, particularly in speaking. As a result, YouTube is selected as one of the options for teaching speaking in teaching procedure text might improve students' speaking skills. On the basis of the literature review and the application of YouTube in the classroom, it is concluded that YouTube can be beneficial to enhance students' speaking skills in teaching procedure text (Ganna et al., 2021). The next research is teacher's strategies in teaching speaking. This study is aimed at portraying teacher's strategies in teaching speaking to students at Senior High School and recognizing the impacts of strategies used by the English teacher. The result revealed that the strategies used by the teacher were discussion, simulation, and communication games. The impact of speaking strategies used by

the teacher are make students more active in learning, creating learners be more positive thinking and increasing the learner's motivation. Among the three of teacher's strategies, almost all of the students like the communication game as the strategy in teaching speaking, because they regard communication game can improve their speaking ability, built their motivation to speak, and make the teaching-learning process become more fun (Ganna et al., 2021). Those studies focus on one skill of English while this this research is to describe the whole teaching and learning process on English subject.

Furthermore, various instructional strategies emphasize different aspects of language learning shape the ELT learning process. Harmer (2015), Nunan (2004), and Richards and Rodgers (2014) present different strategies, each of which provides valuable insights into effective teaching methods. This section reviews their perspectives on teaching strategies before discussing their relevance to the study's findings.

Concerning to ELT, Harmer (2015) highlights the value of interactive and communicative methods. He introduces the Engage, Study, Activate (ESA) paradigm, which directs students towards focused study, encourages teachers to actively involve students in meaningful situations, and then allows them to apply their knowledge in real-world situations. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of pronunciation in speaking fluency, so that conversation can flow naturally. In addition, interactive strategies are also recommended, such as language games, to keep students motivated and involved in the learning process. This suggests that, pronunciation practice, integrated within a communicative framework, supports learners in building confidence and intelligibility. Studies highlight those strategies such as cross-linguistic transfer and interactive language games further contribute to student involvement by reducing anxiety and enhancing motivation (Harmer, 2015). Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), widely known, was introduced by Nunan (1999), shifting the focus from direct grammar instruction to meaningful task completion. He asserted that language can be learned when it is in authentic situations so that language can develop naturally. Nunan also discussed the role of scaffolding in learning, concluding that students' first language (L1) can act as a temporary support for second language (L2) acquisition. In this case, communicative interaction is viewed as a central to language learning and emphasizes the importance of structured tasks and engaging activities.

Richards and Rodgers (2014) provide a broader theoretical perspective on ELT methodologies, classifying approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT) and TBLT as key communicative methodologies. Furthermore, CLT highlights meaningful communication through rigid grammatical structures, and emphasizes the existence of interaction in language acquisition. CLT also addresses the influence of crosslinguistic factors on learning, emphasizing that while L1 can facilitate, it can also hinder L2 development, depending on how the classroom is organized. In their work, the benefits of communicative activities, including games, in promoting spontaneous language use are also explored.

Several studies have explored strategies for student engagement in English learning, focusing on different aspects. For instance, Bala (2020) examined how out-of-class activities, such as watching videos and surfing the internet, contribute to language proficiency. Kusuma and Syam (2022) analyzed classroom interactions in an online learning setting, highlighting the role of synchronous and asynchronous discussions.

Ganna et al. (2021) investigated YouTube as a tool to enhance speaking skills, while another study focused on teacher strategies for improving students' participation in speaking activities through discussion, simulation, and communication games.

Although some preceding studies provide valuable insights into student engagement, they primarily focus on specific language skills or isolated strategies rather than a comprehensive approach to engagement in the entire teaching and learning process. Furthermore, while some studies have analyzed student perspectives on engagement, fewer have examined teachers' perspectives on which strategies are the most effective in practice. Additionally, there is limited research on how multiple strategies—such as CLT, TBLT, and pronunciation practice—work together to support student involvement, particularly for students with lower proficiency or special needs. Given these gaps, there is a need for a more holistic investigation into how different instructional strategies collectively contribute to student engagement in English language learning. Through this research by understanding which strategies are most effective, from both observational and teacher-reported perspectives, this research is expected to contribute to provide deeper insights into optimizing classroom practices. Building on the considerations, this study is aiming at exploring the strategy used in teaching English at a private senior high school in Malang and finding out the most effective strategy applied.

## METHODS

A qualitative case study approach was employed to explore the strategies used by an English teacher to engage students in learning English at a private senior high school in Malang. Data were obtained from non-participatory classroom observations, a structured interview with the only English teacher, and field notes documenting classroom activities. Structured interviews were conducted to determine the types of strategies used and the most effective strategies to increase student engagement. While non-participatory observations were conducted to determine the implementation of these strategies in learning and teaching activities.

Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman (1994) model was adapted, which consists of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction includes selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing information obtained from field notes, interviews, and observations. In the data display stage, the data that has been systematically organized is presented to facilitate interpretation. Finally, in the conclusion drawing and verification process, in-depth analysis is carried out. This aims to obtain meaningful findings on the strategies used to actively involve students in learning English.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Strategies used in teaching English

Based on the observation and interview conducted, five strategies were applied by the teacher in the teaching and learning process.

### Communicative Language Teaching

Interaction and communication are key components of CLT, and strategies include dialogue-based practice, role-playing, and information-gap exercises that prioritize fluency over correctness. Teachers also encourage students to use language as much as they can in real-life situations. In this case, teacher checked students' understanding by making dialogue and asking question:

“Do you understand the form of the verbs?”

The teacher walked around the classroom to check the students' work. One of the female students came to the teacher to ask an explanation. The teacher approached a student with special needs to check his understanding. One of female students with special needs came to the teacher and showed her book. Teacher gave comment to her works. Teacher walked around the class and come to students' desk and asking question to check her understanding. Teacher and several students have a discussion about today's exercise given.

The approach seemed successfully increase the student's involvement. Later, when the teacher left him and move to another student's desk, the student came to the teacher to ask or tell something about the exercise. He showed the teacher his book. The teacher also came to other students' desk to evaluate their understanding. The two male students showed their work and the teacher appreciated it. The teacher then came to other student's desk to check their understanding. A female student answered that she did not understand the assignment.

The teacher checked his students' understanding and gave appreciation of his good works. The student was one of the students with special needs. Then, the teacher explained the topic to a group of female students who needed more explanation. A male student came to the teacher and showed his work. The teacher thought that the student had did the task well.

### Task-Based Language Teaching

Form another classroom observation, it was identified that the teacher implemented Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Teacher assigned the students to find 'regular' and 'irregular' verbs for the meeting. Students worked and discussed with their friends. Teacher gave instruction on students' exercise on Active and Passive Voice. He tried to repeat the instruction to his students to see students' responses. Several students answered his questions signaling that they had comprehended the instructions.

By emphasizing practical assignments and interactive exercises, TBLT also significantly increases student engagement. Students can collaborate and use language in a real-world setting through activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and problem-solving exercises. For example, giving students assignments to identify regular and irregular verbs or practice Active and Passive Voice can improve their language use and problem-solving skills. These activities are also supported by motivating students to interact with the learning materials in a meaningful way.

### **Pronunciation practice within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in a modified form**

In this practice, the teacher asked the students to read a text aloud in front of the teacher. The teacher checked students' pronunciation and asked them to try to find the meaning of the text in Indonesian. If the students found difficulties, they may ask their friend or worked together to find the answer. Definitely, the teacher's focus on checking pronunciation was an element of pronunciation practice. Being a typical feature of CLT, this activity encouraged learners to use language in realistic contexts, including producing accurate and natural pronunciation as part of effective communication.

Furthermore, the teacher applied a modified CLT, because, while CLT focuses on communication, this scenario highlights the use of native language (Indonesian) to understand the meaning of the text, which is not a standard feature of CLT. In this case, CLT generally encourages understanding in the target language and emphasizes fluency over accuracy (although some accuracy is still important, especially in pronunciation). Asking students to find the meaning of words in Indonesian and asking for help from their peers is not a typical pure CLT strategy, but it can be considered a modified approach that integrates elements of collaborative learning and translation (usually more common in Grammar-Translation methods).

### **Cross-Linguistic Transfer**

According to the teacher's interview, using Javanese words in English classes was a useful strategy. He clarified that this method, involves identifying words or sounds that are similar in Javanese and English, makes students feel more at ease and helps them make connections between the two languages. In this case, the students were familiar with the words in their native tongue.

Through this approach, the teacher assisted students to connect English words with Javanese words. In this way, students use their mother tongue, or native language, to help them comprehend and remember English vocabulary. Teachers use Javanese words that have similar sounds or meanings as a complement or aid in learning English to attract students' attention. By relating new English words to words, they already know from their native language, students feel more comfortable and easier in the learning process. Students can more readily connect the two languages by identifying cognates, or words with similar roots or sounds, which makes learning more comfortable and efficient.

This approach is effective in bridging the gap between the students' native Javanese language and English, making it simpler for them to understand and remember. By utilizing students' background knowledge about their first language, learning new vocabulary becomes easier and more relatable, thus reducing students' cognitive load. Furthermore, students can relate the use of cognates, words that have similar sounds or meanings in different languages, allows students to share familiar ideas in their native language and the target language, in this way, the students' cognitive load becomes lighter, and activities related to learning new vocabulary in the learning process are more approachable and less demanding. Students can promote

their confidence in using English and accelerate their vocabulary acquisition by identifying these linguistic similarities.

### **Language games**

Another effective strategy identified was the use of language games, particularly the "tossing paper" game, where students engage in a fun and interactive activity to answer questions and practice English. The teacher mentioned that he led his class to play "tossing paper". The "tossing paper" game here is a game where students throw a piece of paper that has been crumpled into a ball and is easy to toss. The teacher prepares several questions on thick, colored, laminated sheets of paper, with one question on each sheet. A student throws the crumpled paper to a chosen friend, and the student who catches the paper will receive a question to answer. If the student answers correctly, they will throw the paper to another friend. This continues until all the questions have been answered.

### **The most effective strategies applied in teaching English**

Based on the interview, the most effective strategies applied were discovered, namely cross-linguistic transfer and language games. Both strategies were identified as particularly effective by the teacher during the interview and were observed to foster student engagement and comprehension.

Based on the teacher's report, combining the first language (L1), especially Javanese with English, is a very effective strategy. Cross-Linguistic Transfer approach can help students build meaningful connections with the two languages, and make it easier for them to understand grammar and vocabulary. By recognizing the similarities in sound, meaning, or structures between Javanese and English, students feel more comfortable and confident in learning new concepts. Additionally, this strategy can reduce cognitive overload, because students can rely on their prior linguistic knowledge to support their English learning. Teachers also emphasized that strategically, using the mother tongue allows them to scaffold learning, gradually guiding students toward full immersion in English communication.

Another effective strategy identified in this study is the use of language games, which play a significant role in increasing student engagement. These games can be in the form of word association challenges, storytelling competitions, and interactive quizzes, which serve as powerful tools that make learning more dynamic and enjoyable. These games create a low-pressure environment, in which students feel encouraged to participate actively without fear of making mistakes. According to teachers, gamification not only helps students practice their language skills, but also increases motivation, teamwork, and critical thinking. The interactive nature of these games encourages students to practice their speaking and listening skills in a fun and engaging way, which contributes to their overall language development.

## **DISCUSSION**

The result of this study highlights that communicative and student-centered approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and language games significantly enhance student

engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Strategies like role-playing, cross-linguistic transfer, and interactive games help foster fluency, reduce anxiety, and support diverse learner needs, including students with special needs. The use of students' native language for scaffolding also proved beneficial, though it requires a careful balance to avoid over-reliance.

In this case, CLT becomes one of the important ways to encourage student participation in the classroom. through role-playing, dialogue-based activities, and exercises that emphasize fluency over precise correctness, CLT can encourage active student participation. For example, to examine student understanding, the teacher asks questions, such as, "Do you understand the form of the verbs?" This question is given to encourage students to communicate with the teacher. This aligns with the core principle of CLT, where interaction and the use of language in meaningful contexts are prioritized (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The teacher's efforts to check students' understanding, particularly by moving around the classroom and interacting directly with individual students, were also notable. One example from the observations shows the teacher working with students with special needs, offering personalized attention and encouragement. For example, the teacher says, "Dicoba sebisanya, ya. (Try your best, OK.)" To increase student engagement, this tailored feedback lifts their self-assurance in speaking the language, fostering a welcoming and inclusive learning environment (Gibbons, 2022). Furthermore, the dynamic and participatory nature of CLT was illustrated in the conversations that occurred between the instructor and small groups of students, during which the instructor evaluated the students' comprehension and offered comments. While a few students were actively involved in these discussions, it suggested that while CLT does engage some students, there may be a need for further strategies to involve a broader group, particularly those less confident or reluctant to participate. Research shows that providing scaffolded support can help encourage even more hesitant students to engage in communicative activities (Nunan, 2004).

The next teaching strategies used in Task-based Language Teaching. Teachers employed real-world tasks and activities as a means of encouraging language use among their students in TBLT. In order to foster communicative abilities and authentic language use, techniques such as role-plays, problem-solving exercises, and group discussions are essential (Li, 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). One of the main components of TBLT is increasing authentic language use through the use of tasks that simulate real-life scenarios. In addition, task-based activities encourage students to use language in authentic contexts, which promotes deeper language learning (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Although these exercises seem effective in encouraging student communication, more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that all students—including those with special needs or lower proficiency—are equally engaged and given enough assistance to get the most out of them.

Another teaching strategies employed is pronunciation practice within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in a modified form. The modification of CLT by using students' native language (Indonesian) for meaning comprehension could be considered as an advantageous adaptation to support learners' understanding, particularly for those who struggle with the target language (Ellis, 2003). However, this approach raises the question of whether this will make it difficult for students to become fluent and fully immerse themselves in the target language. Nevertheless, this method highlights the importance of adaptability in teaching

strategies to provide the various needs of students, especially those who might need additional linguistic support (Yang et al., 2013).

In addition to that, another strategy observed is cross-linguistic transfer. The strategy the teacher described can be identified as "cross-linguistic transfer" or "mother tongue-based learning". Cross-linguistic transfer embodies language learners' use of linguistic knowledge of their first language to leverage the learning of a second language (Casalis & Louis-Alexandre, 2000). There is growing research evidence of cross-linguistic transfer in the process of second or foreign language learning among alphabetic languages. For example, studies have revealed that bilingual children's linguistic skills, such as phonological awareness and morphological awareness in their home language, predict their acquisition of English literacy (Durgunoglu, 2002; Casalis & Louis-Alexandre, 2000; Littlewood, 2007). However, it is essential for teachers to balance the use of the mother tongue with immersion in the target language to ensure that students are not overly reliant on their first language, which could impede full language immersion (Vasileva & Balyasnikova, 2019). This approach aligns with Vygotsky's (as cited in Godwin-Jones, 2014) theory, which suggests that learners can benefit from scaffolding and guidance through their native language as they move towards more independent use of the second language. By drawing on their prior linguistic knowledge, students can bridge gaps in understanding and achieve better outcomes in language learning.

The last teaching strategies to enhance students' engagement is language games. This strategy is a form of gamification, which has become popular in language learning applications because of its ability to make learning enjoyable and engaging. Research has shown that language games not only increase student motivation but also improve their participation and retention of vocabulary (Deterding et al., 2011; Reinhardt & Sykes, 2014). Combining both movement and collaborative learning, the "tossing paper" game helps students stay engaged and encourages peer-to-peer interaction. This game also enhances active learning by requiring students to think independently and respond quickly. Thus, this activity strengthens students' language skills in a dynamic and low-pressure environment. Furthermore, this form of play encourages positive competition and social learning, which can increase motivation and confidence in using the target language (Siregar et al., 2022; Yaccob et al., 2022). The interactive nature of the game fosters real-time communication and fluency practice, key components of language acquisition as emphasized in CLT. This is in line with the findings of several studies that underline the importance of integrating fun, engaging activities into language learning to increase student involvement and language retention.

The results of this study indicate that interactive and student-centered approaches, including language games activities and cross-linguistic transfer, improve students' learning outcomes. Teachers reported that both strategies increased student engagement and reduced students' anxiety. In other words, students' active participation increased, which in turn resulted in better learning achievement. Several important findings were obtained, although there are limitations to this study. The findings of this study are based on a specific educational setting, so the strategies identified may not be generalizable to different educational settings. Other

differences may also be in student demographics and prevailing institutional policies. The qualitative approach has provided detailed insights but is still limited in how widely the obtained results can be applied. Further research is recommended to investigate a broader range of schools and combine quantitative measures to validate the findings.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the teaching strategies used at private senior high schools in Malang are effective in increasing student engagement in English learning. The five strategies help students to engage with the language through interaction, real-world tasks, and supportive feedback, all of which are important for learning. CLT increases active participation by encouraging students to communicate and focus on fluency, while TBLT provides students with opportunities to use English in realistic tasks. The modified pronunciation practice, which uses native language to facilitate understanding, helps students with language accuracy and comprehension. However, it is important to balance these activities with more use of the target language, so that students become more fluent in English.

Although these strategies help to increase student engagement, there is still room for better improvement. Some students, especially those with lower proficiency or special needs, may need more support to fully engage in the activities. Extra help from the teacher, or adjustments in assignments can be considered, so that all students can participate confidently. This study also suggests that the use of native language (Javanese) in the learning process can help students understand English better. However, teachers should not rely too much on the use of native language, to avoid limiting students' exposure to English. Language games, such as "tossing paper", have also been shown to be interesting, fun and effective in making students interested in learning and motivated. This game encourages communication and can help students practice English in a relaxed and enjoyable way. Likewise, these findings provide valuable insights into effective teaching strategies. Since the study's scope is limited to a specific school setting, future research is recommended to examine different educational contexts in order to further explore the applicability of these approaches.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

[Prastiyowati, S.](#): Conceptualization (lead), methodology (lead), writing –original draft (lead), review (supporting), securing funding. [Hartiningsih, S.](#): Conceptualization (supporting), methodology (supporting), writing –original draft (supporting), review (lead), editing (lead). [Elfana, R.](#): Conceptualization (supporting), methodology (supporting), writing –original draft (supporting), review (lead), editing (lead). [Hamim, M.](#): Conceptualization (supporting), methodology (supporting), writing –original draft (supporting), review (lead), editing (lead).

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