



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# EXPLORING ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHING STRATEGIES AND TEACHING PRACTICES IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to explore English teachers' perceptions of teaching strategies and instructional practices in developing students' communicative competence. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations involving seven English teachers from two public junior high schools in Mauk District, Tangerang Regency. The data were analyzed thematically using method triangulation to ensure validity. The results revealed that 71.43% of teachers perceived communicative competence as the ability to use English in real-life contexts. Meanwhile, 14.29% held a balanced view between communicative and grammatical aspects, and another 14.29% still emphasized grammatical accuracy. However, among the 13 observed teaching practices, only 38.46% involved group discussions or pair work, 30.77% used role-play or real-life simulations, 15.38% applied storytelling or presentations, and 15.38% still implemented grammar-based approaches. These findings indicate a gap between teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices. Although the teachers demonstrated a strong understanding of the importance of communicative approaches, their implementation remains limited due to structural and pedagogical constraints. It can be concluded that while most teachers show positive perceptions toward communicative teaching strategies, their classroom application is not yet optimal.

**Keywords:** teacher perceptions; teaching strategies; teaching practices; communicative competence

**MENGEKSPLORASI PERSEPSI GURU BAHASA INGGRIS TERHADAP STRATEGI PENGAJARAN DAN PRAKTIK PENGAJARAN DALAM MENGEMBANGKAN KOMPETENSI KOMUNIKATIF SISWA**

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**Abstrak:** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi guru bahasa Inggris terhadap strategi dan praktik pengajaran dalam mengembangkan kompetensi komunikatif siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi kelas terhadap tujuh guru bahasa Inggris dari dua SMP Negeri di Kecamatan Mauk, Kabupaten Tangerang. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik dengan triangulasi metode untuk menjamin validitas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 71,43% guru memandang kompetensi komunikatif sebagai kemampuan menggunakan bahasa Inggris dalam konteks kehidupan nyata. Sementara itu, 14,29% guru memiliki pandangan yang seimbang antara aspek komunikatif dan tata bahasa, dan 14,29% lainnya masih menekankan akurasi gramatikal. Dari 13 praktik pengajaran yang diamati, hanya 38,46% melibatkan diskusi kelompok atau pair work, 30,77% menggunakan role-play atau simulasi situasi nyata, 15,38% menerapkan storytelling atau presentasi, dan 15,38% lainnya masih menggunakan pendekatan berbasis tata bahasa. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara persepsi guru dan praktik pengajaran di kelas. Meskipun para guru menunjukkan pemahaman yang baik terhadap pentingnya pendekatan komunikatif, penerapannya di kelas masih terbatas karena adanya kendala struktural dan pedagogis. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa meskipun sebagian besar guru memiliki persepsi positif terhadap strategi pembelajaran komunikatif, penerapannya di kelas belum optimal.

**Kata kunci:** persepsi guru; strategi mengajar; praktik mengajar; kompetensi komunikatif

## INTRODUCTION

Meeting instructional goals that align with the expectations of learners in today's globalized world poses a significant challenge for Indonesian EFL teachers (Rachmawati, 2019). In this context, communicative competence plays a crucial role in enabling learners to interact successfully across diverse social and cultural environments. As noted by Kirkpatrick (2017), communicative competence involves not only grammatical knowledge but also fluency in English, which allows for effective communication. Canale and Swain (1980) emphasized that communicative competence is vital to mastering a new language. It encompasses four key components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Ellis, 2003). These components work together to empower learners to engage in meaningful communication across different contexts. In conclusion, enhancing communicative competence is fundamental in equipping learners with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of global communication, underscoring its importance in modern language education.

Language should be both grammatically correct and socially suitable in varied settings, as emphasized by Hymes (1972), who introduced the concept of communicative competence. This approach provided a fresh perspective on language instruction, one that moved beyond focusing solely on grammar and syntax rules. According to Hymes, knowing when, why, and how to use different language forms in various contexts is crucial for effective communication. Building on this, Canale and Swain (1980) identified four primary aspects of communicative competence: grammatical competence, which involves the ability to produce and understand grammatically accurate sentences; sociolinguistic competence, which refers to using language appropriately according to the social situation; discourse competence, which involves organizing and comprehending extended language sequences to maintain coherence; and strategic competence, which allows individuals to employ strategies to overcome communication barriers and maintain effective interaction. Overall, communicative competence is a multifaceted concept that integrates both grammatical proficiency and the ability to navigate diverse social interactions, making it essential for successful communication.

Despite the recognition of communicative competence as a vital element of language education worldwide, its implementation in English language teaching (ELT) in Indonesia faces significant challenges. In Indonesia, the English curriculum often prioritizes grammatical accuracy and vocabulary memorization, while other components of communicative competence, such as sociolinguistic and strategic competence, tend to be overlooked (Fajrina, 2020). Research by Tumansery and Munden (2020) indicates that the focus in Indonesian classrooms is primarily on mastering grammatical structures, with limited attention given to the development of communication skills needed for real-world interactions. As a result, students often struggle to engage in meaningful conversations, as they are trained to focus on form rather than functional language use (Suryani, 2019). These challenges suggest that while communicative competence is acknowledged as important, fully integrating it into the Indonesian ELT system remains complex.

Despite being included in the national curriculum, English language teaching in Indonesia often focuses more on grammatical structures and vocabulary memorization, while other aspects of communicative competence, such as sociolinguistic and strategic competence, are often neglected (Widodo, 2021). Research by Tumansery and Munden (2020) reveals that the English curriculum in Indonesia places significant emphasis on mastering grammatical forms, with less attention given to developing the broader skills required for effective communication. Consequently, students are less taught how to effectively communicate in authentic contexts and more taught how to articulate complex ideas using formal language structures (Suryani, 2019). According to Suryani (2019), students in Indonesian schools are unable to practice language use in meaningful contexts because textbooks mainly consist of repetitive grammatical exercises and don't offer many chances for students to participate in real-life conversations. This highlights the gap between the curriculum's emphasis on grammar and the actual communicative skills students need for effective interaction in real-world situations.

Moreover, while many studies have acknowledged the gap in teaching communicative competence, few have investigated how teachers' perceptions and beliefs about communicative competence influence their teaching practices in the classroom (Borg, 2003). Borg (2003) suggests that teachers' views on language teaching are often shaped by their personal experiences and professional training, which in turn affect how they interpret and implement the curriculum. These perceptions also influence the teaching methods they select, which may prioritize grammar instruction over fostering communicative competence. Understanding how teachers' beliefs align with curriculum goals is essential for bridging the gap between the intended and actual teaching practices in the classroom. This underscores the importance of examining teachers' beliefs and how they translate into practice, as aligning these perceptions with communicative competence goals can enhance the overall effectiveness of language teaching.

Teachers are the key players in applying this learning, so it's important to know how their perceptions impact the implementation of communicative competence (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). How language instructors present material and encourage student participation in activities centred on communication is heavily influenced by their own personal values, worldviews, and professional experiences (Farrell, 2012). Teachers' views impact their decision-making in the classroom, according to Richards and Lockhart (1994). This includes lesson planning and the selection of teaching tactics. For example, teachers who prioritize grammatical accuracy over communicative fluency may hesitate to incorporate interactive, student-centred activities that promote communicative competence. These beliefs can impact how teachers approach language instruction and whether they are willing to shift away from traditional methods in favor of more communicative-focused practices. Ultimately, recognizing the influence of teachers' perceptions on classroom practice is critical for ensuring that the principles of communicative competence are effectively integrated into the curriculum.

In Indonesia, where conventional teaching methods are still widely used, understanding how teachers view communicative competence is critical (Gunawan, 2020). The lack of teacher training

programs focusing on communicative competence exacerbates the gap between policy and practice. Teachers are often unprepared to implement communicative teaching methods effectively, leading to continued reliance on more traditional, teacher-centred approaches. Suryani (2019) highlights that, despite the inclusion of communicative activities in textbooks, teachers often overlook them due to time constraints or their inability to utilize the necessary techniques. This reliance on conventional methods not only limits students' opportunities for communicative practice but also contributes to the persistence of traditional, form-focused approaches in language classrooms. Therefore, it is essential to invest in teacher training that addresses communicative competence to bridge the gap between policy and practice and enhance the quality of language education in Indonesia.

With an emphasis on ELT in Indonesian junior high schools, this study seeks to address the knowledge vacuum about how instructors' views of their communicative skills impact their pedagogical approaches. The primary goal of this study is to analyze and explore English teachers' perceptions on teaching strategies and teaching practices in developing students' communicative competence. This research will focus on English teachers in the Mauk District, aiming to explore their perceptions on teaching strategies and teaching practices in developing students' communicative competence. Hence, the title of this research is "Exploring English Teachers' Perceptions on Teaching Strategies and Teaching Practices in Developing Students' Communicative Competence."

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research approach by using a descriptive research design to explore and analyze English teachers' perceptions on teaching strategies and teaching practices in developing students' communicative competence. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research seeks to comprehend a social or human issue by drawing on a variety of methodological traditions of inquiry. The research began by selecting the topic and context of the study. The researcher chose to focus on exploring English teachers' perceptions on teaching strategies and teaching practices in developing students' communicative competence. This study was conducted at two public junior high schools in Mauk District, Tangerang Regency, focusing on how English teachers' perceptions on teaching strategies and teaching practices in developing students' communicative competence. After finalizing the research focus, the researcher conducted a comprehensive literature review to understand the theoretical basis, identify previous studies, and determine the research gap, which led to the formulation of research questions and objectives.

The research subjects of this study are English teachers from SMPN 1 Mauk and SMPN 2 Mauk. The total population from both schools is 7 teachers. This study employs purposive sampling, where the sample is selected based on specific characteristics that align with the research objectives. According to Creswell (2012), purposive sampling is a type of non-random sampling technique in which researchers intentionally select individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest.

A research instrument refers to the tools used by researchers to collect data relevant to the research objectives. In qualitative research, instruments must be designed to allow participants to provide detailed descriptions and to give researchers the flexibility to explore the depth of participants' experiences (Sugiyono, 2022). In this study, the researcher employed two primary instruments: semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. These instruments were selected to explore English teachers' perceptions and to observe their actual teaching practices in relation to the development of students' communicative competence.

After data collection, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis of both interview transcripts and observation notes. Data were coded and categorized into themes and sub-themes that aligned with the research questions. This approach helped reveal patterns, confirm consistency between stated beliefs and observed practices, and offer a comprehensive understanding of how English teachers perceive and implement communicative competence in their classrooms.

The researcher utilized the data analysis framework by Creswell (2012) and Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014) to analyze qualitative data gathered through interviews and classroom observations. The process began with transcribing recorded interviews and observation notes to preserve detailed information, followed by repeated readings to ensure familiarity with the data. Open coding was then applied to identify significant statements related to teachers' perceptions, teaching practices, and communicative competence, which were grouped into categories based on similarities. These categories led to the development of broader themes through thematic analysis. To enhance credibility, triangulation was conducted by comparing interview data with classroom observations to verify consistency between beliefs and practices. The findings were interpreted using theoretical frameworks from Borg (2003), Richards & Rodgers (2006), and Canale & Swain (1980), highlighting patterns, contradictions, and implications. Finally, the results were presented through narratives, tables, and thematic summaries, with member checking and peer debriefing ensuring the validity of interpretations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data from 7 English teachers at SMPN 1 Mauk and SMPN 2 Mauk, the study found that their perceptions and teaching practices in developing students' communicative competence varied based on individual experiences, institutional demands, and teaching beliefs. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations from March to May 2025.

The analysis used theories from Borg (2003) on teachers perceptions, Richards and Rodgers (2006) on teaching practices, and Canale and Swain (1980) on communicative competence. By calculating the frequency of each perception and teaching strategy, the researcher can identify the most dominant and the least used approaches among teachers. The total number and the percentage of each category can be seen in Table and Diagram below.

**Table 1**

English Teachers' Perceptions on Teaching Strategies in Developing Students' Communicative Competence

No	Category of Perceptions	Frequency (F)	Percentage (P)
1	Emphasizing Real-Life Language Use (CLT)	5	71,43%
2	Balancing Grammar and Communication	1	14,29%
3	Prioritizing Grammatical Accuracy	1	14,29%
	Total	7	100%

According to the table above, it can be seen that the majority of teachers (71.43%) perceived communicative competence as the ability to use English in authentic, real-life communication. These teachers adopt a CLT-oriented mindset and prioritize functional fluency. Meanwhile, 14.29% expressed a balanced perspective between grammar and communication, and the remaining 14.29% emphasized grammatical accuracy as their instructional focus.

In addition, the description of the total number and the percentage of teaching practice in developing students' communicative competence can be seen in the following table.

**Table 2**

English Teachers' Teaching Practice in Developing Students' Communicative Competence

N o	Category of Teaching Practices	Frequency (F)	Percentage (P)
1	Group Discussions / Pair Work	5	38,46%
2	Role-Play / Simulation of Real-Life	4	30,77%
3	Storytelling / Presentations	2	15,38%
4	Grammar-Focused Instruction	2	15,38%
	Total	13	100%

According to the table above, it can be seen that group discussions and pair work are the most frequently used strategies to foster communicative competence (38.46%). Role-playing activities follow at 30.77%, indicating a strong emphasis on simulation-based learning. Storytelling and presentation (15.38%) are also employed to build discourse competence. However, grammar-focused instruction still appeared in 15.38% of the observed practices, reflecting a remaining preference for traditional methods.

## Discussion

The data of the research are collected from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations conducted with English teachers in SMPN 1 Mauk and SMPN 2 Mauk, Tangerang Regency. As stated in the previous chapter, the writer focuses on exploring English teachers' perceptions on teaching strategies and teaching practices in developing students' communicative competence. For the further steps, the writer analyzes and classifies the findings based on themes derived from interview responses and classroom observations. After analyzing and categorizing the data, the writer found that teachers have various perceptions and implement different teaching practices related to communicative competence. The result of the findings can be described as follows:

### 1. English Teachers' Perceptions on Teaching Strategies in Developing Students' Communicative Competence

There are common perceptions shared by English teachers regarding teaching strategies to develop students' communicative competence. Based on the data collected from seven teachers, the writer found that the majority of them emphasized the importance of real-life language use and the application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. Five out of seven teachers, or 71.43%, namely T1, T2, T4, T5, and T7, stated that communicative competence should focus on how students are able to use English appropriately and effectively in real-life situations. These teachers described communicative competence as more than just the ability to construct grammatically correct sentences; they emphasized students' ability to express ideas naturally and interact fluently across different contexts. For example, T1 said, "Language mastery is not only about grammar or vocabulary, but how students use English naturally in everyday life." T2 also emphasized the need for students to use language flexibly depending on context, highlighting both fluency and interpretation as central elements of competence.

On the other hand, one teacher (14.29%), namely T3, viewed communicative competence as a balance between grammar and communication. She explained that although interaction is important, students still need to learn the correct structure to avoid confusion and miscommunication. Another teacher (14.29%), namely T6, placed more importance on grammatical accuracy than on

communicative fluency, expressing concern that errors in grammar could lead to misunderstanding.

These findings reveal that although most teachers are aligned with communicative-based and student-centered approaches, some still adhere to grammar-oriented perspectives, often due to curriculum demands, standardized testing requirements, or personal teaching philosophies. Therefore, the perceptions of English teachers vary, with the dominant view favoring communicative strategies that support active use of English in realistic contexts.

## **2. English Teachers' Teaching Practices in Developing Students' Communicative Competence**

In terms of classroom practices, the writer observed various instructional activities implemented by the seven English teachers that reflect their perceptions of communicative competence. These practices were categorized and analyzed based on frequency and percentage from a total of 13 observed teaching activities. The most frequently used practice was group discussion or pair work, found in 5 out of 13 observed sessions (38.46%). Teachers who applied this method include T1, T2, T4, T5, and T7. In these practices, students engaged in pair interviews, collaborative projects, and information-sharing dialogues, which encouraged spontaneous communication and mutual learning. These activities helped develop students' discourse competence and promoted active participation in class.

The second most common practice was role-play or simulation activities, observed in 4 classes (30.77%), as implemented by T1, T2, T4, and T6. In these lessons, students were given scenarios to act out, such as shopping at a market, introducing themselves at a job interview, or conducting a phone conversation. Role-playing supported the development of sociolinguistic and strategic competence, as students needed to adapt their language according to social roles and solve problems through language.

Furthermore, storytelling and presentations were observed in 2 lessons (15.38%), used by T3 and T5. Students were asked to retell a personal experience, describe a past event, or give a short presentation on a chosen topic. These practices enhanced students' fluency, vocabulary use, and confidence in public speaking. Although not as commonly applied, they are useful in building narrative and cohesive speaking skills.

The remaining 2 observed sessions (15.38%) showed grammar-focused instruction, especially in T3's and T6's classes. In these classes, teachers explained grammatical rules explicitly and asked students to complete written drills and textbook exercises. While these methods focused more on form than meaning, they were used to ensure students understood the structure of language and could apply it accurately in speaking and writing.

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that most teachers implement communicative practices that support active use of English, especially through group work, discussion, and role-play. These strategies reflect their beliefs about promoting communicative competence. However, traditional approaches such as grammar explanation and controlled practice are still maintained by some teachers, either as foundational reinforcement or as a response to institutional pressures. Thus, classroom practices reflect a hybrid approach, combining communicative principles with structural methods to address both practical communication skills and curriculum demands.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings, it was concluded that English teachers' perceptions of teaching strategies to develop students' communicative competence varied. The majority (71.43%) believed that communicative competence involves the ability to use English meaningfully and appropriately in real-life situations, emphasizing fluency, confidence, and interaction. However, a smaller portion of teachers either prioritized grammatical accuracy (14.29%) or sought a balance between grammar and interaction (14.29%). These differences were influenced by factors such as teaching experience, educational background, curriculum demands, and classroom conditions.

In terms of teaching practices, most English teachers implemented communicative strategies, though not consistently. The most frequent practice was group discussion or pair work (38.46%), followed by role-play or real-life simulations (30.77%). Some teachers also used storytelling, student presentations, or grammar-focused instruction (each 15.38%). Despite the dominance of communicative perceptions, many teachers still relied on structure-based approaches due to challenges like low student proficiency, limited instructional time, and curriculum or exam requirements.

The key implication of the study is that most teachers understand the importance of communicative competence and recognize the need for fluency, interaction, and contextual understanding beyond grammar. Therefore, teaching strategies should offer students more real-life language use opportunities through discussions, simulations, and multimedia. However, there remains a gap between this understanding and practical application due to systemic constraints that hinder consistent communicative teaching.

To bridge this gap, targeted professional development is essential. Training should not only explain the theory behind communicative competence but also provide practical techniques for task-based teaching, classroom interaction, and curriculum alignment. With some teachers still focusing on grammar, ongoing support such as mentorship, collaborative lesson planning, and access to classroom resources is needed to help them adopt communicative approaches more confidently and effectively.

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p-ISSN: 2615-8671

e-ISSN: 2615-868X

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