



Teacher Preparedness and Communicative English Learning Among Young Learners in Central Lombok

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ABSTRAK

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji kesiapan guru dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar di Lombok Tengah. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada motivasi guru, pengalaman mengajar, dukungan profesional, praktik kelas, dan tantangan yang memengaruhi peluang belajar komunikatif siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan etnografi dengan data dari observasi kelas, wawancara, dan diskusi kelompok terarah bersama enam guru bahasa Inggris sekolah dasar. Data dianalisis secara tematik melalui proses pengodean, kategorisasi, dan triangulasi antar-sumber data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa guru memiliki motivasi tinggi untuk mengajar bahasa Inggris karena mereka memahami pentingnya bahasa Inggris bagi masa depan siswa. Namun, praktik pembelajaran masih didominasi oleh drilling, hafalan kosakata, terjemahan langsung, dan latihan berbasis buku teks. Keterbatasan pengalaman mengajar, minimnya pelatihan berkelanjutan, serta fasilitas kelas yang terbatas menghambat penggunaan pendekatan komunikatif. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar membutuhkan pelatihan praktis, komunitas belajar guru, dukungan media ajar, dan kebijakan lokal yang responsif terhadap kebutuhan sekolah desa.

Abstract: *This study examines teacher preparedness in primary English language teaching in Central Lombok. It focuses on teachers' motivation, teaching experience, professional support, classroom practice, and the challenges that shape young learners' opportunities for communicative English learning. The study adopted an ethnographically informed qualitative design. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions with six primary school English teachers. The data were analyzed thematically through coding, categorization, and triangulation across data sources. The findings show that teachers had strong motivation to teach English because they recognized its value for students' future learning opportunities. However, classroom practice remained dominated by drilling, vocabulary memorization, direct translation, and textbook-based exercises. Limited teaching experience, lack of sustained professional development, and restricted classroom facilities constrained teachers' ability to apply communicative activities. The study argues that improving primary English learning in rural school contexts requires practical teacher training, teacher learning communities, instructional media support, and locally responsive education policy*



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A. BACKGROUND

English language education in Indonesian primary schools has moved through several policy changes. English was introduced in primary education through the 1994 Curriculum, but its status became less stable

when it was no longer positioned as a compulsory subject in many primary schools during the implementation of later curricula. This shifting policy context has produced uneven English learning opportunities, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas where school resources, teacher supply, and

professional support vary considerably (Butler, 2015; Zein, 2016). In Central Lombok, these changes matter because many children encounter English mainly through school. When classroom exposure is limited, the teacher becomes the main source of language input, practice, and motivation.

Research on English for young learners shows that early English learning can support language awareness and communicative confidence when it is supported by age-appropriate pedagogy, meaningful interaction, and repeated exposure (Cameron, 2001; Enever, 2015; Pinter, 2017). Children do not learn another language effectively through isolated memorization alone. They need concrete experiences, visual support, songs, games, classroom routines, and opportunities to use simple language for real purposes (Cameron, 2001; Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). Communicative language teaching also requires learners to use language to express meaning, respond to others, and participate in interaction, not only to recognise vocabulary or translate sentences (Richards, 2006; Savignon, 2017).

Teacher preparedness is therefore a central issue in primary English education. Preparedness includes language competence, pedagogical knowledge, confidence, material design, classroom management, and the ability to adapt instruction to students' developmental stage and local context (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Richards & Farrell, 2011; Zein, 2016). In Indonesia, several studies have shown that English teachers in primary schools often work under limited institutional support, unclear policy direction, and inadequate preparation for teaching young learners (Suhirman, 2014; Zein, 2016). These issues become more visible in rural contexts because teachers may have fewer opportunities to access training, teaching media, and professional networks (Nurrahmah et al., 2016; Wajhah & Yusof, 2024).

This study focuses on teacher preparedness in primary English teaching in Central Lombok. Rather than measuring student proficiency through numerical scores, the article examines how teacher preparedness shapes classroom practices and communicative learning opportunities. This focus is methodologically suitable because the study is grounded in ethnographic observation, interviews,

and focus group discussions. Ethnography allows the researcher to understand teaching as a social and contextual practice, including how teachers interpret their roles, respond to constraints, and make instructional decisions in everyday classroom life (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

The study addresses the following questions. First, how do primary school English teachers in Central Lombok understand their preparedness to teach English? Second, what challenges do they face in preparing and implementing English lessons? Third, how does teacher preparedness shape students' opportunities to learn English communicatively?

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used an ethnographically informed qualitative design. This design was selected because the study aimed to understand teacher preparedness as a situated classroom practice, not only as an individual attribute that can be measured through a questionnaire. Ethnographic inquiry is appropriate for examining how teachers work within local school cultures, resource conditions, and student backgrounds (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). The study also used data triangulation to compare teachers' accounts with classroom observations and focus group discussion data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2013).

The participants were six primary school English teachers in Central Lombok. They taught six classes in different school contexts. The participants were selected because they were directly involved in English instruction at the primary level and could provide information about classroom practices, teacher needs, and student learning conditions. The study did not report individual student scores because the article focuses on teacher preparedness and classroom learning opportunities. Student learning was interpreted through teachers' accounts, classroom observation, and patterns of classroom participation. This decision keeps the analysis aligned with the qualitative and ethnographic focus of the article.

Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. Classroom observations were used to examine teaching methods, teacher-student interaction, the use of textbooks and media, and

students' opportunities to practice English. Interviews explored teachers' motivation, educational background, teaching experience, confidence, training access, and perceived challenges. Focus group discussions were used to identify shared concerns and recommendations from the teachers. These methods allowed the study to capture both individual perspectives and collective professional concerns.

The data were analyzed thematically. Interview and focus group data were read repeatedly to identify recurring ideas. Codes were then grouped into broader themes related to teacher motivation, teaching experience, professional support, perceptions of student ability, and teacher expectations. Observation notes were used to check whether teachers' reported practices were consistent with classroom events. Thematic analysis was used because it provides a flexible and systematic way to identify patterns across qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The credibility of the findings was strengthened through triangulation across interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observation.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented through five interrelated themes: teacher motivation, teaching experience and classroom practice, professional support and training, teachers' perceptions of student ability, and teachers' expectations for future support

1. Teacher Motivation and the Value of English

The first theme concerns teacher motivation. The teachers showed strong motivation to teach English because they believed that English would support students' future education and employment opportunities. Several teachers described English as an important competence for children in their villages. One teacher stated, "I want to teach English because English is important for students' future." Another teacher explained that she chose English education because she wanted to help others learn the language.

This finding suggests that teachers did not view English as a marginal subject. They saw it as a meaningful skill for young learners. This motivation is important because teacher belief and commitment influence instructional decisions, classroom persistence, and willingness to improve

practice (Richards & Farrell, 2011; Yusra et al., 2022). However, motivation alone did not ensure communicative teaching. Classroom observations showed that teaching was still dominated by drilling, vocabulary memorization, direct translation, and teacher-led explanation. This pattern reflects a gap between teachers' positive orientation toward English and their practical capacity to design communicative activities.

The gap is significant because young learners need concrete, interactive, and meaning-focused activities (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017). When English lessons depend heavily on memorization, students may remember individual words but have fewer chances to use English for communication. This limits the development of communicative competence, which requires interaction, comprehension, negotiation of meaning, and contextual use of language (Richards, 2006; Savignon, 2017).

2. Teaching Experience, Confidence, and Classroom Practice

The second theme concerns teaching experience and teacher competence. Most participating teachers had relatively short experience in teaching English. Four teachers had taught English for less than five years. Some teachers began teaching English because their schools needed English teachers. This condition shaped their confidence and instructional choices.

Teachers reported that they often used methods they considered manageable, such as drilling vocabulary, asking students to memorize meanings, translating words and sentences, and completing textbook exercises. One teacher explained that drilling helped students remember vocabulary. Another teacher said that speaking activities were usually conducted through guessing games, where the teacher performed an action and students guessed the meaning. These activities gave students some exposure to English vocabulary, but they did not provide enough sustained oral interaction.

Observation data supported the interview findings. Productive skills, especially speaking and writing, received limited classroom time. Listening activities were also constrained by limited media and audio facilities. This finding is consistent with international research showing that teaching speaking is one of the major challenges faced by teachers of young learners (Copland et al., 2014). It also aligns with studies in Indonesian contexts that highlight the need for specialized preparation

for primary English teachers (Suhirman, 2014; Zein, 2016).

The teachers used the *My Next Words* textbook available in school libraries. The book contains vocabulary presentation, listening and response activities, short speaking tasks, reading tasks, survey activities, and reflection sections. However, teachers tended to use the textbook in a routine way. The textbook supported lesson structure, but it did not automatically lead to varied classroom interaction. This shows that textbook availability does not replace teacher training. Teachers need support to adapt textbook activities, extend tasks, and turn written exercises into spoken interaction (Cameron, 2001; Richards, 2006).

3. Professional Support and Training

The third theme concerns professional support. Teachers reported limited access to regular training. Some mentioned that teacher forums existed, but meetings were not held consistently. Others stated that training was mostly available for selected teachers, such as those who joined the *Guru Penggerak* program or professional teacher education. This created uneven professional learning opportunities.

One teacher stated that an MGMP existed but did not run regularly, and that the classroom had no teaching media apart from the blackboard. Another teacher, who had joined the *Guru Penggerak* programme, reported receiving training on teaching media and teaching methods. She also had access to a wider teaching community and school facilities such as a speaker for listening activities. This contrast shows that professional development can influence teachers' access to ideas, confidence, and instructional variation.

Professional development is most useful when it is content-focused, sustained, collaborative, and connected to classroom practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009). For teachers in Central Lombok, one-off workshops may not be enough. They need continuous support that helps them plan simple communicative activities, use low-cost media, manage large or mixed-ability classes, and adapt textbook content. Professional learning should also include peer discussion, classroom demonstration, and shared reflection because teacher change develops through practice and feedback (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Richards & Farrell, 2011).

The findings also show that teacher preparedness is not only a personal matter. It depends on school leadership, facilities, local education offices, teacher communities, and access

to relevant training. This supports the argument that teacher agency needs enabling conditions. Teachers may want to improve their practice, but their agency can be weakened when institutional support is limited (Yusra et al., 2022).

4. Teachers' Perceptions of Student English Ability

The fourth theme relates to teachers' perceptions of student ability. Teachers generally described students' English ability as basic and varied. Some students could memorize vocabulary, while others had low motivation and limited exposure to English. Teachers believed that students in more remote schools tended to have lower English motivation than students in more developed or semi-urban areas. They also linked student performance to school facilities and learning exposure.

This finding should not be interpreted as a problem located only in students. Young learners' English development depends on the quality of input, classroom interaction, teacher support, home literacy environment, and learning opportunities (Butler, 2015; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In many rural contexts, school may be the only place where students encounter English. If classroom input is limited to vocabulary lists and translation, students may have little opportunity to develop listening and speaking confidence.

The teachers' perceptions were consistent with the observed classroom pattern. Students were more comfortable with familiar vocabulary and repetition than with open responses. This suggests that students' communicative difficulty may reflect limited classroom opportunities to use English. From a sociocultural perspective, children develop new abilities when teachers provide scaffolding within their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding in English lessons can include modelling, sentence frames, pair practice, visual prompts, classroom routines, and guided repetition that moves gradually toward meaningful communication.

5. Teachers' Expectations and Local Support Needs

The fifth theme concerns teachers' expectations. The teachers wanted practical training on teaching methods and instructional media. They expected support from local teacher

groups, school leaders, and education offices. They also valued discussion with fellow teachers because it could increase motivation and help them improve classroom practice.

These expectations are realistic and contextually grounded. Teachers did not only ask for policy recognition of English. They asked for practical support that could help them teach better in their actual classrooms. This includes simple media, audio facilities, examples of communicative activities, and regular meetings with other English teachers. In rural education contexts, support systems need to be local and sustainable. Cluster-based workshops, peer mentoring, lesson study, and shared material development may be more useful than short, centralized training events (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009).

The findings also suggest that English teaching in primary schools should not rely only on individual teacher effort. A stronger local ecosystem is needed. Schools can provide basic media and scheduling support. Teacher groups can organize peer sharing and collaborative lesson planning. Local education offices can map teacher needs and provide targeted training. Universities can support schools through community-based teacher development and research-informed mentoring

D. DISCUSSION

Across the five themes, the study shows a clear gap between teacher motivation and pedagogical preparedness. Teachers believed in the value of English and wanted students to learn it well. However, limited teaching experience, restricted training access, and insufficient facilities pushed teachers toward conventional methods. This affected students' opportunities to use English communicatively.

Theoretically, this finding confirms that young learner pedagogy requires more than early exposure. Children need meaningful interaction, concrete learning experiences, and carefully scaffolded classroom practice (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). Policy support for English at the primary level will have limited impact if teachers do not receive preparation that fits the needs of young learners (Butler, 2015; Zein, 2016).

Methodologically, the ethnographic orientation of this study allowed the analysis to move beyond

general claims about teacher readiness. The data showed how preparedness appeared in actual classroom routines, such as the use of drilling, translation, textbooks, limited media, and teacher-led instruction. Ethnographic data are useful because they reveal how teachers negotiate policy expectations, school constraints, student needs, and their own professional confidence in daily teaching practice (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

The study does not report student scores because the article does not claim a statistical relationship between teacher preparedness and student proficiency. Instead, the analysis focuses on how teacher preparedness shapes learning opportunities. This framing is more consistent with the study design and avoids overclaiming. Future studies may include detailed student assessments if the purpose is to test the effect of teacher preparedness on measurable learning outcomes.

E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study examined teacher preparedness in primary English teaching in Central Lombok. The findings show that teachers had strong motivation to teach English and understood its importance for students' future learning. However, classroom practice remained dominated by drilling, memorization, translation, and textbook-based tasks. This pattern was shaped by limited teaching experience, lack of sustained professional development, restricted teaching media, and uneven institutional support.

The study concludes that teacher preparedness strongly shapes students' opportunities to learn English communicatively. Students' limited confidence in using English cannot be separated from the kinds of input, interaction, and practice made available in the classroom. Improving primary English education therefore requires teacher development that is practical, continuous, collaborative, and responsive to local school conditions.

The study recommends regular teacher training on young learner pedagogy, communicative classroom activities, textbook adaptation, and low-cost media use. Schools and local education offices should strengthen teacher forums and provide basic learning facilities, especially audio and visual media. Future research can examine the impact of teacher

training on classroom interaction and student learning outcomes using a longitudinal or mixed-method design that includes detailed student assessment data.

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