

COMPARING TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR ENCOURAGING ENGLISH SPEAKING IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

Duratun Nasekhah¹
Universitas Negeri Semarang
duratunnasekhah@students.unnes.ac.id

Girindra Putri Dewi Saraswati²
Universitas Negeri Semarang
girindraputrids@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract: This study aims to compare the strategies used by pre-service English teachers to encourage students to speak English in urban and rural schools in Semarang and to examine the challenges encountered in both contexts. Guided by sociocultural theory and communicative language teaching principles, this qualitative study involved four pre-service English teachers participating in a teaching internship program, comprising two from urban schools and two from rural schools. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis of lesson plans and teaching materials, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that pre-service teachers in rural schools tend to employ simpler and more supportive strategies, such as group work, language games, short conversations, and question-and-answer activities, which align with students' limited vocabulary and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom. In contrast, teachers in urban schools apply more varied and structured strategies, including discussions, presentations, role-play, think-pair-share, and the integration of digital media, as explicitly indicated in their lesson plans. While low student confidence emerges as a challenge in both contexts, its manifestation differs: in rural schools, it is mainly associated with limited exposure and vocabulary constraints, whereas in urban schools, it is more closely related to fear of making mistakes in more interactive learning settings. Overall, the study highlights that speaking instruction is highly context-dependent and requires pre-service teachers to adapt strategies to students' characteristics and learning environments.

Keywords: *Teacher strategy, Pre-service Teacher, EFL Speaking skills, Urban and Rural Schools*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is considered effective when the receiver understands the message delivered by the sender. Language plays an important role as a tool for human interaction, especially in the learning process, because it allows individuals to convey ideas and exchange meaning clearly (Richards, 2015). According to Nadrun, (2021) Through speaking skills, students can convey ideas, exchange opinions, and practice the courage to communicate directly. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), speaking enables students to communicate orally in meaningful situations and actively participate in classroom interaction (Rahnama et al., 2016). However, many EFL students still face challenges in developing speaking skills, such as limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, low confidence, and limited opportunities to practice English both inside and outside the classroom (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

To overcome these challenges, teachers need to implement appropriate learning strategies to help students achieve speaking learning objectives (Niken, 2021). The implementation of appropriate speaking strategies is essential, as many students often experience difficulties, such as a lack of

confidence, pronunciation errors, and limited vocabulary (Mulyati, 2022). Speaking is a productive skill that requires students to use language naturally in meaningful contexts; therefore, teachers should provide opportunities for interaction and allow students to learn from their mistakes (To & Pedagogy, 2007). Richards (2001) emphasizes that communicative activities such as role-playing, discussions, and information-gap tasks can help students practice speaking more meaningfully and increase classroom engagement. Through appropriate strategies, students are more likely to participate actively in speaking activities. Similarly, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes that speaking growth happens via social interaction, in which learners gradually increase their confidence and capacity to express ideas verbally with the help of teachers and peers (Vygotsky, 1978). These theoretical perspectives indicate that the effectiveness of speaking strategies depends not only on the strategies themselves, but also on how they are applied in real classroom contexts.

In practice, this adaptation process becomes most apparent during teaching internships, as pre-service English teachers are required to translate pedagogical theories into actual classroom teaching. Based on the experiences of student interns during their teaching practice, English teachers in both urban and rural schools employ various strategies to encourage students to speak English in class. Internship students as pre-service teachers often need to adapt their teaching strategies to the real conditions in the classroom, such as students' confidence levels, language skills, and classroom atmosphere. These instructional choices are influenced by teachers' beliefs and their perceptions of students and classroom situations, which shape how teaching strategies are selected and implemented during classroom teaching practices (Borg, 2003). During the internship program, pre-service teachers encounter diverse learning contexts that require adjustments to speaking activities, materials, and interaction patterns. Consequently, the strategies used to encourage students to speak English differ between urban and rural schools, reflecting variations in learning contexts and levels of student participation.

Differences between urban and rural school contexts influence the implementation of English teaching strategies. Urban schools generally have better facilities, more learning resources, and greater exposure to English, which support student participation in speaking activities (Handayani et al., 2023). In contrast, rural schools often face limited facilities, minimal learning resources, and limited exposure to English, requiring teachers to apply more adaptive teaching strategies (Saputri, 2024). This condition has implications for how teachers, including intern students, develop and implement speaking learning strategies, because student responses to communicative activities such as discussions and group work are highly dependent on classroom conditions and student preparation in each context (Karima et al., 2025). Learning activities that are adapted to the school environment, available facilities, and real-life situations faced by students can support a more meaningful learning experience. Differences in educational contexts can influence how speaking activities are designed and adapted to meet students' needs (Johnson, 2002).

In the context of education in Indonesia, the gap between urban and rural schools significantly affects the quality of learning. Rural schools generally have limited learning facilities, access to technology, and opportunities for students to be exposed to foreign languages compared to urban schools (Echazarra, 2019). In EFL learning, speaking skills are strongly influenced by opportunities for practice and environmental support. Studies show that students in rural areas tend to demonstrate lower confidence and participation in speaking due to limited exposure to English both inside and outside the classroom (Handayani et al., 2023). Similarly, Zein (2017) highlights that the limited use of English in schools and communities is one of the main factors hindering students' engagement in oral communication. As speaking ability is an important competence in foreign language learning that requires direct exposure and practice, differences in the learning environment contexts of urban and rural schools are thought to influence how teachers design and implement speaking teaching strategies in the classroom. Therefore, it is important to examine how pre-service English teachers adapt their speaking teaching strategies in both contexts, in an effort to understand the role of the learning environment in overcoming educational gaps.

From a conceptual perspective, this study places the school context (urban and rural) as an intermediate factor in the relationship between teachers' speaking strategies and students' participation

in English speaking activities (Baldwin & Fryer, 2020). Previous EFL research suggests that teaching strategies are impacted by contextual conditions, including classroom interaction patterns, learning environments, and opportunities for using the target language (Sato & Loewen, 2019). The differences between urban and rural school contexts also influence how speaking strategies are applied and how students participate in oral classroom activities, particularly in relation to motivation and willingness to participate. Furthermore, empirical research shows that contextual and environmental factors serve as mediating mechanisms, affecting the influence of teaching strategies on student participation across varied learning situations (Lena & Nikolov, 2025). Therefore, the school context is conceptualized as an intermediate variable that influences the extent to which teachers' speaking strategies are translated into active student participation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes.

Despite numerous studies examining the teaching of speaking in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), attention to the implementation of speaking teaching strategies in various school contexts remains limited, especially through direct comparisons between urban and rural environments. The absence of this comparative focus is a problem because teaching strategies that are effective in one context may not produce similar results in another context due to differences in institutional support, classroom interaction patterns, and student exposure to English. Without contextual comparison, existing research tends to ignore how environmental factors shape the implementation and effectiveness of speaking strategies, resulting in general pedagogical recommendations that may not apply across different educational environments. Addressing this issue is crucial for developing context-sensitive EFL pedagogy that acknowledges variation in learning environments. Therefore, this study contributes to this field by comparatively analyzing speaking teaching strategies and the challenges faced by pre-service English teachers in urban and rural schools in Semarang, highlighting how contextual differences influence speaking teaching and student participation in EFL classrooms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design to investigate and compare the speaking teaching strategies used by prospective English teachers in encouraging students to speak English in urban and rural schools in Semarang. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and teaching practices within their natural teaching context. This study focuses on a small, purposively selected group of participants to obtain rich and detailed data relevant to the research objectives. This design is appropriate for identifying the types of strategies implemented by pre-service teachers and for comparing how these strategies are used in different school settings.

Participant

This study involved four pre-service English teachers, consisting of two who taught in urban schools and two in rural schools in Semarang. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, as they met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives: they were pre-service teachers currently teaching, specifically teaching speaking skills in English classes, and were assigned to either urban or rural school contexts. This sampling method allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth and context-rich data on the teaching strategies and challenges faced by prospective teachers in different school environments, while also capturing variations in teaching practices and classroom conditions that may affect students' opportunities to speak English.

Data collection

This study employed two data collection methods, namely interviews and document analysis. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format supported by a prepared interview guide to ensure that key topics related to speaking teaching strategies were consistently addressed across participants, while still allowing them to freely share their experiences. Each interview was audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data. The interview questions focused on several key aspects, including the types of speaking activities implemented in the classroom, the reasons for selecting particular strategies, perceived student responses and participation, challenges encountered in encouraging students to speak, and the ways teachers adapted their strategies to students' characteristics and learning environments. In addition, document analysis was used as supporting data to reinforce the interview findings through the examination of relevant teaching documents, such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and teaching notes prepared by the pre-service teachers. The integration of interview and document data enabled data triangulation, which enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings by allowing cross-verification of the reported strategies and their implementation in classroom planning and learning activities.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected from interviews and document analysis, in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. First, the interview recordings were verbatim transcribed, and both the transcripts and the documents were reviewed several times to ensure data familiarity. Second, initial codes were developed to highlight important portions about spoken teaching styles, contextual variations between urban and rural schools, and pre-service teacher issues. Third, the codes were grouped into probable topics. Fourth, the themes were evaluated and improved to guarantee internal consistency and obvious contrasts between them. Fifth, themes were developed and designated according to their connection to the study topics. Finally, the themes were reported and evaluated to compare the use of speaking styles in various educational settings.

Trustworthiness and Validity

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, various strategies were implemented. Methodological triangulation was carried out by comparing interview data with relevant teaching documents, such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and teaching notes, to verify the consistency between reported practices and actual classroom planning. In addition, member checking was conducted by inviting participants to review their interview transcripts and clarify or confirm the accuracy of their statements. These procedures enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmation of findings by reducing potential researcher bias and ensuring that interpretations accurately reflect participants' perspectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Strategies in Encouraging Students to Speak

3.1.1. Rural Area

Based on interview data and analysis of learning documents, it was found that pre-service teachers in rural schools in Semarang employ simple and interactive strategies to encourage students' participation in speaking English. These strategies include question-and-answer sessions, pair work, group discussions, games, simple conversations, and presentations. The selection of strategies is adjusted to students' conditions, class characteristics, and learning objectives.

PT1-R explained that the strategy used focused on collaborative activities and getting students used to using English gradually. As mentioned by PT1-R, *"The strategies I often use are think-pair-share, group discussions, and pair work for simple dialogues. I also use simple English songs and storytelling to start conversations. In class, I implement an 'English only zone' at the beginning of the session to get them used to speaking"*. This showed that PT1-R uses speaking activities that allow students to communicate with peers and become comfortable using English in basic and familiar situations.

The reason PT1-R chose this strategy was related to the affective aspects and characteristics of secondary school students, who have low self-confidence when speaking individually. PT1-R stated, *"I chose this strategy because secondary school students still lack confidence when it comes to individual presentations. Group activities and games create a more relaxed classroom atmosphere, reduce fear of making mistakes, and are appropriate for their active age group. This strategy is also based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasises real interaction"*. The statement indicates that PT1-R chose the strategy to create a more comfortable and supportive classroom atmosphere so that students feel more confident and courageous to speak English.

Furthermore, PT2-R also uses interaction-based strategies to increase student participation in speaking English. PT2-R mentioned, *"The strategies I usually use are games, discussions, group work, and presentations. These strategies give students more opportunities to speak directly in an interactive classroom setting"*.

The reason PT2-R chose this strategy was that it was appropriate for the learning material and reduced teacher-centered learning, as stated by PT2-R, *"I chose this strategy because it fits the material. I teach and make learning more interactive and less boring. In addition, this strategy helps reduce overly teacher-centred learning and encourages students to be more actively involved"*.

In addition to interview data, the findings of this study are also supported by an analysis of the learning documents used by PT1-R and PT2-R. A summary of the document analysis results is presented in the table below:

Document code	Learning objective	Students activities	Interaction types	Alignment between planning and implementing
PT1-Rural	Students can respond orally to descriptive texts and present simple descriptions in English	Students respond orally to the teacher's questions about descriptive texts, practice a guided dialog in a group of six =, prepare a short PPT, and present in front of the class.	Teacher– student, group work, student– student	Learning objectives focusing on oral responses and group presentations are implemented through guided dialogue and collaborative speaking activities.
PT2-Rural	Students can present short descriptive texts orally about people and daily routines using the appropriate present tense and descriptive language feature	Students respond orally to teacher questions, participate in speaking games, work in pairs to describe a classmate, and present short descriptive texts orally.	Teacher– student, pair work, group work	The learning objective emphasizes oral presentation through collaborative speaking games, pair-based description tasks, and group presentations.

Table 1. PT1-R Document Analysis Results

Based on the table, the strategies outlined in the learning documents align with those described by PT1-R and PT2-R in the interviews. PT1-R's document emphasizes guided dialogue and group presentations to build student confidence, while PT2-R's focuses on games and pair activities to increase speaking participation. This alignment indicates that speaking strategies in rural schools are systematically designed to promote student engagement through interactive and collaborative activities.

3.1.2. Urban Area

Based on interview data, pre-service teachers in urban schools in Semarang employ varied and interactive speaking strategies to encourage students to speak English. These strategies include presentations, think-pair-share, paired dialogues, games, role-play, and the use of digital media and web-based tools. Strategy selection is influenced by students' affective conditions, differences in English proficiency, and the need to create enjoyable and low-anxiety learning environments.

PT1-U explained that the strategy it implemented emphasized the use of interactive activities aimed at increasing students' courage speak in front of the class. As mentioned by PT1-U, *"I usually use strategies through interesting and interactive learning methods such as presentations, think-pair-share, and paired dialogues. Sometimes I also give extra points to students who are willing to speak or answer questions in English"*. The statement shows that

P1-U implements the strategy that involves interaction between students through pair work and discussions, as well as adding a point system as a form of encouragement to increase student participation in speaking English.

The reason for choosing this strategy is related to the students' condition, who still show shyness and lack confidence when they have to speak in front of the class. PT1-U stated, *"I chose that strategy because I saw that many students were still shy and lacked confidence when it came to speaking in front of the class. By working in pairs or small groups, they became more relaxed and daring to try. This strategy is also suitable for students whose English skills vary, so they can help each other. As for additional points, I think it can motivate students to try speaking English"*. This shows that PT1-U planned to implement a strategy based on pair work and small groups to build a more conducive learning environment, adjust to differences in students' English proficiency levels, and increase motivation through a bonus point system.

Meanwhile, PT2-U used strategies that focus on fun, creativity, and technology integration. PT2-U explains that this approach aims to create a more engaging learning environment and encourage to actively participate in English speaking activities. PT2-U stated, *"The strategy I usually employ is the use of games, role-play, and the application of web tools such as Wordwall, Quizizz, and speaking practice at the beginning of the lesson"*.

The reason for choosing this strategy was based on a focus on minimizing students' anxiety when asked to speak in English, especially when they had to perform in front of the class. PT2-U stated, *"Here, I often use website tools to make learning more interesting (Wordwall) and also role-play for students to act as guests and hosts in podcasts. By making the learning materials and activities as fun as possible. When students are asked to speak English, especially in front of the class, directly asking them questions can seem like a daunting challenge. However, by making the challenge fun, it eliminates that fear and ultimately encourages students to speak. I also allow students to mix languages (Indonesian and English) if they feel there are words they don't know"*. This statement shows that PT2-U chose a flexible and enjoyable strategy to reduce student pressure, utilizing role play and digital media to make speaking activities easier and allowing the use of mixed language to maintain smooth communication, even though the students' vocabulary was limited.

In addition to interview data, the findings of this study are also supported by an analysis of the learning documents used by PT1-R and PT2-R. A summary of the document analysis results is presented in the table below:

Document code	Learning objective	Students activities	Interaction types	Alignment between planning and implementing
PT1-Urban	Students are able to express opinions and identify statements of agreement and disagreement with appropriate word stress and pronunciation	Students respond orally to questions about opinions, expressions of agreement and disagreement in groups, discuss worksheet tasks using Think-Pair-Share, and present	Teacher-student, pair work, group work	The learning objective focusing on expressing opinions is implemented through paired dialogues, group discussions, and oral presentations.

Document code	Learning objective	Students activities	Interaction types	Alignment between planning and implementing
	in spoken interaction.	individual answers orally to the class.		
PT2-Urban	Students can express opinions, defend arguments, and present an argumentative podcast orally on the topic of e-money.	Students respond orally to agree/disagree prompts, discuss argumentative statements in groups, perform role-play as podcast host and guest, collaboratively draft an argumentative podcast, and present their podcast orally using digital platforms.	Teacher– student, pair work, group work	The speaking objective is implemented through staged activities that move from guided opinion-sharing to collaborative role-play and final oral presentation of an argumentative podcast.

Table 2. PT2-R Document Analysis Results

Based on the table, learning documents in urban schools emphasize to express opinion and speaking in a more complex manner than in a rural context. PT1-U focuses on paired dialogue and individual presentations, while PT2-U utilizes role play and digital media to encourage argumentative and contextual speaking skills. The alignment between the documents and the interview result shows that the strategies in urban schools are purposefully designed to support students who are more active and have relatively higher levels of self-confidence.

3.2 Challenges in Encouraging Students to Speak

3.2.1 Rural Area

Based on interview data, pre-service teachers in rural the challenges most often, faced by pre-service teachers are students' low self-confidence and fear of making mistakes when speaking English. Teachers also face difficulties, mainly due to the large number of students in a class and differences in activity levels between classes. As mentioned by PT1-R, *“The main challenges are students' shyness and fear of making mistakes, especially with pronunciation. Also, large classes (30-40 students) make it difficult to monitor everyone when speaking. In rural areas, there are additional challenges of minimal facilities and low motivation because students feel that English is “useless” in everyday life”*. The statement shows that challenges in rural schools stem not only from psychological factors affecting students but also from classroom conditions that limit teachers' ability to give equal attention and feedback during speaking activities.

According to PT1-R, students in rural schools face various obstacles in participating in English-speaking activities. These challenges are not only related to limited vocabulary, but are also influenced by linguistic and social environmental factors, as reflected in the following statement: *“Students often struggle with limited vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation due to the*

influence of regional languages/Javanese, and a lack of confidence due to fear of being ridiculed by their peers. In rural areas, many individuals lack support from their parents, resulting in minimal practice outside of class”.

To overcome these challenges, PT1-R implements group-based activities and simple dialogues to create a more comfortable atmosphere and reduce students' fear of making mistakes when speaking English. As mentioned by PT1-R, *“I usually use group work, simple dialogues, games, and storytelling to make students feel more relaxed. By working in groups, they are not afraid of making mistakes and become more confident to try speaking English”.*

Meanwhile, the main challenges faced by PT2-R are related to students' limited vocabulary and low enthusiasm for learning in some classes, which causes students to have difficulty expressing their ideas verbally, even though they understand the teachers' instructions. In addition, differences in activity levels between classes also affect the dynamics of learning and require more effort from teachers to encourage equal participation among students. As mentioned by PT2-R, *“The challenges I face most often are students' limited vocabulary and a lack of enthusiasm in some classes. Many students actually understand the instructions, but they have difficulty expressing themselves verbally. In addition, student enthusiasm varies from class to class. Some classes are active and enthusiastic, but others are passive and uninterested, making the classroom atmosphere less lively and requiring more effort from the teacher to encourage participation.”*

According to PT2-R, students' difficulties in speaking English are mainly caused by fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and limited vocabulary, so they tend to hesitate and only give short responses. *“From what I have observed, students are often afraid of making mistakes and lack confidence, especially when they have to speak in front of the class. They are also sometimes confused about how to construct sentences because their vocabulary is limited. So even though they participate in activities, they usually only give short answers or follow their friends, but do not yet dare to actively speak English”.* This finding shows that students' challenges are linguistic and psychological in nature, which directly impacts their low level of active participation in speaking activities.

To overcome these challenges, PT2-R creates a supportive classroom environment through a step-by-step approach. Teachers begin lessons with games to reduce tension, then provide simple example sentences as guidance for students and group work to boost students' confidence when speaking. PT2-R stated, *“I usually start with games to lighten the mood in the classroom and help students relax. After that, I give them simple example sentences so they have an idea of what to say. I also often use group work, because when they are with their friends, they are more confident and not afraid of making mistakes. Gradually, this method helps students become more courageous and active in speaking practice.”*

3.2.2 Urban Area

Based on interview data, pre-service teachers face various interrelated challenges in encouraging students to speak English. The main challenge for PT1-U is related to selecting appropriate discussion materials to encourage critical thinking and the expression of students' opinions in English. Materials that are too complex tend to confuse students and make it difficult for them to express their ideas verbally. In addition, shyness, low self-confidence, and limited mastery of basic English concepts are also obstacles in speaking activities. As mentioned by PT1-U, *“The challenge itself may be finding discussion material that encourages students to think and express their opinions in English. For example, if the discussion material is too difficult, students may be confused about how to express their opinions, so it is necessary*

to find discussion material that encourages students to practice speaking English. Additionally, the challenge is that they are still shy and lack confidence when speaking English. That is the biggest challenge, in my opinion. Furthermore, some children have not yet mastered the basic concepts of English”.

In addition, PT1-U revealed that what students experience when participating in English speaking activities is related to embarrassment, lack of confidence, and not yet mastering basic English concepts. Students' inability to understand basic vocabulary, such as basic verbs, makes them afraid of making mistakes when speaking. This condition causes students to be unwilling to actively participate in speaking activities. This was stated by PT1-U as follows: *“From what I have seen in class, the challenge is that they are still shy and lack confidence when speaking English. That is the biggest challenge, in my opinion. In addition, some children have not yet mastered the basic concepts of English, such as basic verbs, so they are afraid of making mistakes when speaking.”*

To overcome these challenges, PT1-U creates a supportive classroom environment through group and pair work, language modeling, and positive feedback so that students are more confident in speaking English. *“I usually create a safe and supportive classroom environment by emphasizing to students that it is normal to make mistakes when learning English, so they don't need to be afraid to try to speak. To encourage students to be more confident, I usually use group work or pair work, because talking with friends is usually more comfortable than speaking in front of the whole class. Before they practice, I also give examples of pronunciation and some vocabulary so that students have an idea of how to speak correctly. Additionally, I give praise and positive feedback, rather than focusing too much on mistakes, so that students' confidence and enthusiasm are maintained.”*

Meanwhile, the challenge faced by PT2-U relates to pronunciation, particularly the similarity in sound between several English words, which confuses students when speaking, as explained by PT2-U as follows: *“Pronunciation is often a challenge, because sometimes some words are almost similar and that causes a little confusion.”*. The statement shows that phonological factors are one of the main challenges to speaking in urban classrooms

According to PT2-U, students have difficulty participating in English-speaking activities because they are afraid of making mistakes, worry about mispronunciation, and are unable to construct complete sentences. Even though students understand the meaning of the words or messages they want to deliver, they still have difficulty putting those words together into complete English sentences. PT2-U explains this as follows: *“Based on my experience, some students are still afraid to try speaking. Perhaps they are afraid of mispronouncing words or being laughed at. In addition, even though they already know the meaning of the words or the message they want to convey, many students still find it difficult to string those words together into complete sentences in English.”*

To overcome these challenges, PT2-U creates a supportive learning environment by encouraging students to speak without pressure, practicing collaborative vocabulary search, and starting activities through pair or group discussions before presenting in front of the class. PT2-U stated, *“To overcome these challenges, as I have outlined above, I usually create a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment. I do not require students to speak entirely in English if they are not yet able to, but rather encourage them to be brave and try first. If there are unfamiliar words, we look up their meanings together, so that students understand that making mistakes is part of learning. I also often begin speaking activities with discussions in pairs or groups before students speak in front of the class.”*

3.3 Comparison of Learning Strategies and Challenges in Encouraging Students to Speak English in Rural and Urban Areas

Aspect	Rural Schools	Urban Schools
Speaking strategies	Simple and supportive strategies such as question-and-answer activities, language games, pair and small group work, and short conversations	More varied and structured strategies, including discussions, role-play, presentations, think-pair-share, and digital-based activities
Instructional focus	Building basic confidence and reducing anxiety in speaking English	Encouraging active participation, fluency development, and more complex interaction
Use of learning media	Minimal use of digital media; reliance on textbooks and teacher-led activities	Frequent integration of digital media (slides, videos, online materials) as stated in lesson plans
Language use in class	A combination of Indonesian and English to support comprehension	Predominantly English with limited use of Indonesian
Main challenges	Low confidence caused by a limited vocabulary and minimal exposure to English outside school	Low confidence related to fear of making mistakes and peer evaluation in interactive activities

Table 3. Comparison of Learning Strategies and Challenges in Rural and Urban Schools

There are clear differences between the teaching strategies and challenges faced by pre-service English teachers in urban and rural schools in Semarang in encouraging students to speak English. In rural schools, the teaching strategies used tended to be simpler, more flexible, and supportive, with a primary focus on building students' confidence to speak and creating a safe and comfortable classroom atmosphere. Pre-service teachers mostly use simple questions and answer activities, small group work, language games, and short conversations on topics close to students' daily lives, such as food, animals, and daily activities. In addition, the use of a mixture of Indonesian and English is still allowed as a supporting strategy to help students with limited vocabulary to continue participating without feeling afraid or embarrassed. This strategy was chosen as a form of adaptation to the main challenges in rural schools, namely low student confidence, high fear of pronunciation and sentence structure errors, the influence of regional languages on English pronunciation, and minimal exposure to English outside the school environment. The relatively large class size also poses a challenge, as prospective teachers find it difficult to monitor and provide feedback to all students equally during speaking activities.

In urban schools, pre-service English teachers use various structured speaking strategies that encourage active student participation, such as role-playing, Think-Pair-Share, group discussions, oral presentations, and peer feedback. These strategies are supported by tools such as Wordwall, Quizizz, and podcasts. Teachers implement speaking activities gradually, starting with small group or pair discussions and progressing to whole-class presentations, giving students time to think and prepare their ideas. Despite using well-

designed strategies, teachers still face challenges due to differences in student abilities. Some students are more confident and speak more, while others are less active. Although not as common in rural schools, some students still feel nervous or afraid of making mistakes. Overall, this shows that urban schools use interactive and communication-based methods that help students participate more actively. On the other hand, rural schools focus more on helping students build confidence and reduce anxiety. These differences occur because of the school environment and student background, showing that the effectiveness of speaking lessons depends on how well the teaching methods suit the situation in each school. Should you have tables, please refer to this format of the table, no vertical line used:

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that differences exist in the speaking teaching strategies used by pre-service English teachers in rural and urban schools in Semarang, shaped primarily by contextual factors rather than instructional effectiveness alone. Although both contexts share the same goal of encouraging students to speak English actively, the strategies applied in rural schools tend to be simpler and more flexible, such as short conversations, group work, games, and question-and-answer activities, which align with students' limited exposure to English and aim to support initial confidence building. Meanwhile, pre-service teachers in urban schools employ more varied and structured strategies, including role plays, discussions, presentations, and the use of digital media, reflecting students' prior exposure and learning environments that allow for more complex interaction. Challenges related to confidence and fear of making mistakes are present in both contexts, though their degree and impact vary depending on school conditions. As this qualitative study involved a limited number of participants within a specific geographical context, the findings offer context-specific insights into speaking instruction in Semarang and should be interpreted with caution rather than generalized to broader educational contexts in Indonesia.

REFERENCES

- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81–109.
- Echazarra, A., & Radinger, T. (n.d.). *Learning in rural schools : Insights from PISA , TALIS and the literature*. 196.
- Handayani, I., Sakhiyya, Z., & Faridi, A. (2023a). *Enhancing Teacher-Students Interaction in Urban and Rural Schools in Pekalongan*. 13(December), 506–518.
- Handayani, I., Sakhiyya, Z., & Faridi, A. (2023b). *Enhancing Teacher-Students Interaction in Urban and Rural Schools in Pekalongan*. *English Education Journal*, 13(4), 506–518.
- Husnain, Syam T. A, Niken, S. A. (2021). Teachers' strategies in teaching speaking at high school. *Journal of Foreign Language and Educational Research*, 4(2), 1–64.
- Johnson, E. B. (2002). *Contextual teaching and learning: What it is and why it's here to stay*. Corwin Press.
- Karima, K., Windianto, N. E., Machfudi, M. I., & Salsabila, H. (2025). *Assessing translanguaging as a strategy for enhancing students ' classroom activity participations in a rural vocational high school : A case study*. 6(2), 284–299.
- Lena, M. S., & Nikolov, M. (2025). The Roles of Teachers and Contextual and Motivational

- Factors in Young Learners' Motivation: A Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Approach. *Education Sciences*, 15(10), 1388.
- Leong, L., & Ahmadi, S. M. (n.d.). *c r v i h o e f c f*. 34–41.
- Mulyanti Sapna, Nadrun, W. A. (2021). Teachers' strategies in teaching speaking at high school. *Journal of Foreign Language and Educational Research*, 4(2), 1–11.
- Oga-baldwin, W. L. Q., & Fryer, L. K. (2020). *Profiles of language learning motivation : Are new and own languages different ?*
- Rahnama, M., Rad, N. F., & Bagheri, H. (2016). *Developing EFL Learners ' Speaking Ability , Accuracy , and Fluency*. 7(6), 1–7.
- Richards, J. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in language teaching Second Edition*.
- Richards, J. C. (2015). *Key Issues in Language Teaching*. 32(1), 113–116.
- Saputri, Y. E. (2024). *Teacher ' s Challenges and Strategies in Teaching English in Rural Areas*. 3(9), 2011–2018.
- Sato, M., & Loewen, S. (2019). *Evidence-based second language pedagogy*. Routledge New York, NY.
- Sri Mulyati. (2022). An Analysis Study on Teacher Strategy to Improve Speaking Skill Students in the Sixth Grade of Elementary School Diniyyah Al Azhar Jambi. *Jurnal Ilmiah Dikdaya*, 12(1), 21. <https://doi.org/10.33087/dikdaya.v12i1.290>
- To, A., & Pedagogy, L. (2007). *TEACHING BY PRINCIPLES : AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH TO LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY* Author : H . Douglas Brown Publisher : Pearson Education (US) Publication Country : Upper Saddle River , United States Language : English DOWNLOAD : *TEACHING BY PRINCIPLES : AN INTERACTIVE Teaching by Principles : An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy PDF Book*. 1–6.
- Vygotsky, L. (n.d.). \$1989 Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. In *Cambridge: Harvard University*
- Zein, M. S. (2017). *Elementary English education in Indonesia : Policy developments , current practices , and future prospects*. 33(1), 53–59. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078416000407>