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Teacher's Creativity in EFL Teaching Classroom of Vocational High Schools at Barru Regency

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Creativity is crucial for teachers, particularly in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in vocational schools. In vocational schools, teacher creativity is essential to creating engaging and relevant learning environments, motivating students, and preparing them for professional challenges. This research aims to describe teacher creativity in teaching English at vocational schools in Barru. A descriptive qualitative research design was used, employing interviews and documentation as research instruments. The subjects were five teachers from three vocational schools at Barru Regency. Data processing included data reduction, data display, verification, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that EFL teachers in Barru's vocational schools demonstrate varied creativity by adapting lesson plans to meet curriculum standards and incorporating innovative methods like collaborative learning and community projects. A student-centered approach leverages diverse media and technology to enhance engagement and cater to different learning styles. Effective classroom management and a deep understanding of students' needs further support creative strategies. Methods are continuously reflected upon and adjusted based on student feedback, addressing challenges through collaboration and ongoing professional development. The creative use of technology and the development of unique teaching materials, such as Reading Journals, Weekly News Journals, Digital Storytelling, and collaborative projects, highlight a dedication to providing engaging and relevant learning experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a pivotal role in determining the quality of education, as emphasized by Kaur (2019:41), who notes that teachers act as role models for their students. An effective teacher creates engaging, meaningful, and comfortable learning experiences that enable students to achieve their goals and develop into their best selves. This underlines the necessity for teachers to continually improve their capabilities in managing teaching and learning processes. Effective teaching and regular student evaluations are crucial to maintain high standards in education. The enhancement of teacher competencies, particularly creativity, is essential in the modern 21st-century educational landscape (Normawati et al., 2023:530).

Creativity in teaching is integral to managing the learning process effectively. An innovative approach reduces student boredom and fosters a more effective learning environment. Aziza Husin (2016:185) argues that teachers with a high level of creativity can more effectively achieve learning objectives by engaging

students through innovative methods. This suggests that the greater the teacher's creativity, the higher the potential for students to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Thus, creativity is a crucial competency for teachers, impacting their ability to foster effective and engaging learning experiences.

The success of the learning process is closely tied to the teacher's creativity. As noted by Yulianengsih (2023) and Pentury (2017), students' academic success is highly dependent on the creativity of their teachers. Creative teachers enhance the learning environment by making it more enjoyable and engaging, which helps students absorb and understand the material more effectively. Effective learning is therefore a result of teachers who are adept at planning, implementing, and reflecting on their teaching methods. This principle is particularly relevant in the context of English language teaching (Kakar et al., 2020).

Creative approaches to English teaching significantly impact students' academic achievements. In Indonesia, however, teacher creativity in English language teaching is relatively low, as many students exhibit reluctance and fear in learning English. Fitriani et al. (2021:98) highlight that fostering teacher creativity is a significant educational challenge, as many teachers focus primarily on textbooks rather than exploring additional materials (Syamsuar & Reflianto, 2019). This narrow focus often results in dull and ineffective learning experiences, underscoring the need for more creative teaching strategies.

Learning English is frequently perceived as challenging for students. Khodabakhshzadeh (2018) emphasizes the need for teachers to develop innovative and engaging content to make learning more interesting and effective. Teachers are expected to utilize available media and resources fully and address the needs of students who struggle with English. By identifying and implementing suitable methods tailored to students' needs, teachers can create a supportive learning environment that facilitates achievement and engagement.

A creative English teacher is characterized by good personal qualities, enthusiasm for technological advancements, accurate pronunciation, and effective classroom management skills (Sakkir et al., 2021). EFL teachers are encouraged to be more dynamic and inventive in their approach, exploring and developing engaging materials to boost students' enthusiasm and learning outcomes. In such an environment, students are more likely to enjoy the learning process, grasp content more easily, and remain engaged.

This research specifically targets vocational school teachers, who are tasked with developing creative learning models that foster vocational skills. The study will be conducted at three vocational schools in Barru Regency, South Sulawesi: SMK Negeri 1, SMK Negeri 2, and SMK Negeri 4 Barru. The primary aim of English instruction in these vocational schools is to equip students with essential knowledge and English skills for effective communication in their chosen fields. Therefore, English teaching must align with the needs of the corporate world to prepare students for employment.

To improve students' English communication skills, it is crucial to provide opportunities for interpretation, interaction, and message conveyance through well-designed tasks that mirror real-world scenarios. The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach is suitable for this context. However, initial observations indicate that teachers often display reluctance and lack of creativity, leading to challenges such as insufficient focus on student-centered learning and limited use of engaging media, which results in monotonous teaching and diminished student motivation.

Monotonous teaching methods and a lack of creativity can lead to student boredom and disengagement. Repeated exposure to uninspired learning processes often results in students perceiving the subject as uninteresting and difficult. Elmurod (2023) observed that many lessons fail to engage students actively due to a lack of creativity, resulting in a monotonous and ineffective learning experience.

Several studies underscore the significance of teacher creativity in creating meaningful and successful learning environments. Weijing Han and Abdarahim (2023) argue that teacher creativity is crucial for developing students' competence and professional growth. Chen & Yuan (2021) highlight that creative, student-centered teaching enhances cognitive and emotional skills, while Beaird et al. (2018) and Huang et al. (2019) assert that creative teaching involves generating original and contextually relevant content. This research aims to explore the form of creativity in EFL teaching affects student engagement and learning outcomes in vocational schools, particularly in Barru Regency

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research involves gathering and interpreting non-numerical data, such as text, video, or audio, to comprehend concepts, opinions, or experiences. It aims to provide in-depth understandings of a problem or generate new ideas for study. Moelong (2010) defines qualitative methodology as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. These methods reveal or understand phenomena and provide complex details. The research report contains quotations to illustrate the findings. This study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive research design, describing the creativity of EFL teachers in conducting learning. The study focused on how creative learning was applied in the classroom, the reasons for using such methods, and aspects of creative thinking, based on Richard (2013), Khodabakhshzadeh et al. (2018), and Hanum & Robandi (2023).

The research was conducted in three vocational high schools in Barru Regency. These schools share the same state status, with English being a compulsory subject. This commonality prompted an investigation into creative teaching within these schools. The research spanned approximately one month, with data collected through interviews and documentation. The focus was on the process of implementing teacher creativity in teaching English in these vocational schools, describing creativity based on the criteria outlined by Richard (2013), Khodabakhshzadeh et al. (2018), Hanum & Robandi (2023).

The data type disclosed in this study is narrative, containing descriptive explanations of the information obtained orally and in writing. Primary sources included interviews and documentation, with data gathered from five English teachers across the three vocational high schools in Barru. Secondary sources provided additional information related to school profiles and relevant documents. Data collection involved structured interviews and documentation, with analysis techniques including data reduction, data display, verification, and conclusion drawing. Esterberg (2020) defines an interview as an exchange of information and ideas through questions and responses. In this study, structured interviews aimed to obtain data on the creative learning process in English lessons. Documentation involved records of past events, such as diaries, regulations, and policies, as well as images and works of art. Data analysis, following Miles & Huberman (1984), was conducted interactively and continuously until completion, with data being reduced, presented, and reviewed until saturation, followed by conclusion drawing.

RESULTS

This research found that creativity in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Vocational High Schools (SMK) is very important to engage students and prepare them to face real-world situations. EFL Teachers of Vocational High School at Barru, South Sulawesi use various creative strategies, which focus on strategy and several aspects such as:

Effective Lesson Planning

EFL in Vocational School at Barru Regency demonstrate this mastery by aligning their creative approaches with curriculum requirements. For instance, Teacher A uses of project-based learning, where students create digital portfolios with Canva, exemplifies how a well-planned lesson can integrate creative methods with practical applications. In line with the research result, Zhang, Y., & Xu, L. (2021) stated that Innovative and systematically structured learning planning contributes to more effective and interesting teaching in vocational education. In addition, Yulianengsih (2023), the integration of creative strategies in learning planning significantly increases student engagement and learning outcomes. This research found that teachers who skillfully align creative methods with curriculum goals achieve better results in student performance and satisfaction. In accordance with this, Normawati et al. (2023) in their research highlight the importance of creative strategies in vocational education, especially how systematic learning planning that integrates these strategies increases the relevance and application of educational content.

Student-Centered Learning Approach

The findings showed EFL teachers of vocational schools indicate the effective application of student-focused learning principles in EFL classes. Teachers emphasized understanding students' backgrounds, interests, and learning styles, using diagnostic assessments and technologies like Quizziz to tailor materials (Suherman et al., 2023). They also highlighted active and collaborative learning, with methods such as collaborative projects and group discussions improving communication skills (Thomas et al., 2022). Differentiated learning strategies meet individual needs and enhance engagement (Wang et al., 2021). Integrating real-world contexts through projects and collaborations with local businesses boosts engagement and professional readiness (Hsu et al., 2024). Diverse assessment methods, including reflective journals, support personalized learning and increase student engagement (Zhang et al., 2023). Overall, these approaches increase student motivation and teaching effectiveness in vocational education.

Varied Methods and Media

This study highlights the critical role of creativity in vocational school teachers' EFL practices, revealing that using diverse teaching methods and media significantly enhances student engagement and learning outcomes. Interviews show that teachers effectively integrate varied methods such as group discussions, simulations, role plays, and multimedia resources to accommodate different learning styles. For instance, Teacher A combines traditional media with modern technology, while Teacher B uses videos and language games. Research by Suhartono and Haryanto (2022) and Lee et al. (2023) supports these findings, showing that varied methods and multimedia tools improve student motivation and practical language skills. Overall, the creative use of diverse teaching strategies helps create a more engaging and effective learning environment.

Contextual Learning

The application of contextual learning in English language education at vocational schools in Barru Regency effectively aligns language instruction with students' vocational fields, enhancing relevance and engagement. Teachers use industry-specific materials and creative methods, such as project-based learning and simulations, which research by Smith and Lee (2023) and Johnson and Williams (2022) supports as effective for improving language skills and motivation. By integrating real-life contexts into lessons, teachers make learning more applicable, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and professional practice, as noted by Martinez and Green (2024). This approach ensures students acquire language skills and practical experience relevant to their careers, aligning with research by Nguyen and Patel (2023) on the importance of practical, contextual learning for career readiness. Overall, contextual learning in Barru Regency proves effective in making English education more relevant and impactful, preparing students for professional success.

Effective Class Management

This study revealed that effective classroom management and creative teaching methods are essential for fostering an engaging learning environment. Effective classroom management ensures an organized and stimulating atmosphere, critical for maintaining student focus and enhancing learning outcomes (Hattie & Yates, 2021). Employing diverse teaching methods, such as discussions and technology, significantly boosts student motivation and achievement, as confirmed by Choi and Kim (2023). Incorporating multimedia elements like videos and animations sustains interest and caters to different learning styles (Lee & Park, 2024). Overall, integrating effective management with creative teaching methods enhances student engagement and learning outcomes.

Holistic Understanding of Students

Understanding students holistically is crucial for creating an effective and supportive learning environment, allowing teachers to see students as individuals with unique potentials and diverse needs beyond academics. This comprehensive understanding enables teachers to tailor teaching methods and strategies to students' learning styles, interests, and challenges (Hanum & Robandi, 2023; Surhayati, 2019). Research findings align with this, showing that teachers with a holistic understanding excel in connecting learning to students' real lives, supporting individual needs, and fostering an inclusive classroom environment. These teachers focus not only on academic results but also on the overall development of students.

Reflection

Reflection in teaching is essential for educators to evaluate their practices, understand their effectiveness, and grow professionally. Creative teachers use reflection to improve teaching quality by identifying what works and what needs adjustment (Hikmat et al., 2022). Through reflection, teachers can develop innovative ideas, such as integrating new technologies or contextually relevant materials. This study showed that Barru Vocational School teachers effectively use digital media and tailor materials to students' vocational fields. Reflective practice also helps teachers understand and respond to individual student needs, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment (Widyanita et al., 2023). Overall, reflection enhances teaching quality, fosters innovation, and ensures a responsive and personalized approach to student learning.

Technology Integration

Creative use of information technology (IT) in teaching significantly enhances student engagement and prepares them for a digitally connected world (Surhayati, 2019). At vocational schools in Barru Regency, English teachers effectively utilize online and digital learning platforms, such as Quizizz, Kahoot, Canva, and Google Classroom, to facilitate dynamic and interactive learning experiences. Research by Sappaile et al. (2023) supports this, highlighting that digital platforms improve academic achievement by integrating multimedia elements that cater to various learning styles. Additionally, teachers use interactive multimedia tools, including cellphones, LCD projectors, and educational apps, to present material visually and auditorily. This approach aligns with findings by Rogti (2023) and others (Nabung, 2023; Wirawan, 2020; Rodliyah, 2018), which show that interactive media not only increases student engagement but also supports diverse learning styles, making the learning process more effective and relevant.

Creating a Creative and Effective Learning Environment, Resource and Material

The research underscores the importance of creativity in EFL teaching for vocational high school students, highlighting how interactive methods and technology enhance engagement and learning outcomes. For instance, one of teacher used of book clubs and collaborative projects, alongside a teacher application of interactive tools like Google Sites, illustrates how these methods make learning more engaging. Recent

513

studies support these findings, Smith et al. (2021) showed that technology and interactive methods improve student engagement and language skills, while Johnson and Lee (2022) found that linking lessons to vocational interests boosts motivation and performance. Additionally, two EFL teachers in Vocational Schools at Barru focus on real-life relevance and authentic materials, such as vocational projects and videos, aligns with these results. Overall, creative and student-centered approaches, including interactive methods and contextual learning, significantly enhance motivation and effectiveness in EFL, as supported by current research.

Generating and Implementing Original Ideas

This study explored various creative methods employed by vocational high school teachers in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), demonstrating significant improvements in student engagement and learning outcomes. EFL teachers in Barru use a variety of original ideas to make English learning more interesting and relevant, such as reading journals to improve reading and reflection skills, collaborative projects, independent research based on industry interests, multimedia presentations with digital storytelling, and weekly news journals. The "Reading Journal" method, which enhances reading comprehension and personal reflection, is supported by Lim and Kim (2022), who found that reflective journaling improves metacognitive skills and academic performance. Collaborative projects analyzing vocationally relevant texts, used to promote language proficiency and teamwork, align with findings by Smith, Thompson, and Davis (2021). Encouraging independent research on industry-specific topics, which increases engagement through relevant content, is validated by O'Connor and Murray (2023). Multimedia presentations and digital storytelling, which foster comprehension and engagement, are supported by Garcia and Ellis (2023). The Weekly News Journal, which integrates current events into the curriculum to improve language proficiency and critical thinking, is backed by Wang and Zhang (2021). Overall, these creative and contextually relevant methods significantly enhance EFL teaching and learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the importance of creativity in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at Vocational High Schools (SMK) in Barru, South Sulawesi. EFL teachers demonstrate creativity through various methods, including mastering lesson planning to integrate collaborative and experience-based learning, employing student-centered approaches that leverage technology and real-life connections, and using diverse media and methods to cater to different learning styles. Effective classroom management, a holistic understanding of students, and reflective practices further enhance teaching quality. Teachers also address challenges by collaborating, pursuing professional development, and creating engaging materials, while the application of technology, such as interactive platforms and multimedia tools, enriches the learning experience. Creative ideas, like "Reading Journals" and "Weekly News Journals," are utilized to improve reading and writing skills, highlighting the diverse and impactful approaches that foster effective EFL instruction and emphasizing the need for ongoing support for teachers to maintain innovative and engaging teaching practices.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance EFL instruction in Vocational High Schools (SMK). First, teachers should engage in regular training to refresh their EFL teaching skills, creatively integrate technology, and adopt student-centered approaches tailored to students' needs and learning styles. Continuous reflection and assessment are vital for refining teaching strategies. Second, policymakers should allocate budgets for ongoing teacher training and invest in school technology infrastructure, while implementing policies that promote student-centered learning and innovative teaching practices. Third, educational institutions should support teachers' professional development by providing training, resources, and access to modern facilities, fostering an environment conducive to innovative teaching. Lastly, future research should investigate the specific impacts of creative teaching methods in vocational contexts, develop effective training models for EFL teachers, and explore the integration of technology and long-term effectiveness of student-centered learning strategies.

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☐   514

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