



Creative Teaching Strategies and Student Engagement in a Rural Indonesian EFL Classroom: A Case Study from Sumbawa

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi pengajaran kreatif yang diterapkan oleh guru bahasa Inggris dan dampaknya terhadap keterlibatan siswa di SMP Negeri 2 Utan, Kabupaten Sumbawa. Fokus utama adalah untuk mengidentifikasi bagaimana berbagai strategi seperti pujian, permainan edukatif, aktivitas awal pembelajaran, penggunaan musik, dan tugas kelompok mempengaruhi keterlibatan siswa dalam tiga dimensi: afektif, kognitif, dan perilaku. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan siswa, serta kuesioner terbuka. Teknik triangulasi digunakan untuk memastikan validitas data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pengajaran kreatif guru berdampak positif terhadap keterlibatan siswa. Pujian membangun kepercayaan diri siswa, permainan edukatif dan musik menciptakan suasana belajar yang menyenangkan, dan tugas kelompok meningkatkan kolaborasi. Keterlibatan afektif siswa tercermin dari antusiasme dan rasa senang saat belajar, keterlibatan kognitif tampak dari peningkatan pemahaman melalui interaksi dan diskusi, sedangkan keterlibatan perilaku ditunjukkan melalui keaktifan siswa dalam menjawab dan berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan kelas. Namun demikian, ditemukan pula hambatan eksternal, terutama kondisi sosial ekonomi siswa yang mengharuskan mereka membantu orang tua bekerja, sehingga mengganggu kehadiran dan konsistensi keterlibatan belajar. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya strategi pengajaran yang kontekstual dan dukungan lingkungan belajar yang holistik, termasuk keterlibatan orang tua.

Kata kunci: kelas EFL, keterlibatan siswa, konteks pedesaan, strategi pengajaran kreatif

Abstract

This study aims to examine the creative teaching strategies implemented by English teachers and their impact on student engagement at SMP Negeri 2 Utan, Sumbawa Regency. The main focus of this study is to identify how various strategies, such as praise, educational games, pre-learning activities, the use of music, and group assignments, affect student engagement in three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and open-ended questionnaires. Triangulation techniques were used to ensure data validity. The results showed that teachers' creative teaching strategies had a positive impact on student engagement. Praise built students' self-confidence, educational games and music create a pleasant learning atmosphere, and group assignments enhance collaboration. Students' affective engagement is reflected in enthusiasm and enjoyment while learning, cognitive engagement is seen in increased understanding through interaction and discussion, while behavioral engagement is demonstrated through students' activeness in answering and participating in



class activities. However, external obstacles were also found, particularly students' socioeconomic conditions that require them to help their parents work, thus disrupting attendance and consistent learning engagement. This research emphasizes the importance of contextual teaching strategies and holistic learning environment support, including parental involvement.

Keywords: creative teaching strategies, EFL classroom, rural context student engagement

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Introduction

In recent years, creative teaching strategies have become a key focus in efforts to increase student engagement, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Student engagement is a crucial indicator of the learning process because it encompasses interrelated affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions (Fredricks et al., 2004). However, in EFL classrooms, challenges such as language anxiety, low self-confidence, and limited exposure to English outside the classroom often hinder optimal student engagement (Rosdiana & Taufiqulloh, 2025).

International research emphasizes the importance of innovative and life-relevant learning approaches to foster holistic engagement. (Almukhailid, 2020) state that a supportive classroom environment and positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and students are essential prerequisites for effective engagement. (Richards, 2013) add that teachers in Asia face unique challenges, but creativity through the use of media, humor, and strategic flexibility can be key to encouraging active student participation. Various innovative approaches have been implemented in various countries. (Alizadeh m-alizadeh, 2024), for example, demonstrated that flipped learning can significantly increase student engagement. Meanwhile, (Jack et al., 2025) demonstrated that gamification in learning creates a more engaging and participatory classroom atmosphere. (Philp & Duchesne, 2016) also highlighted the effectiveness of communicative, collaborative, and affective approaches in increasing overall student participation.

In Indonesia, particularly in rural and coastal areas such as Sumbawa Regency, the learning context presents unique challenges. SMP Negeri 2 Utan, one of the public schools in this region, reflects the educational landscape, with limited infrastructure, socioeconomic disparities, and diverse student ethnolinguistic backgrounds and academic abilities. A study by (Pasutri & Yeni, 2022) found that teachers in areas like Sumbawa experience difficulties implementing higher-order thinking learning due to low learning motivation and minimal environmental support. However, several local studies indicate that a fun, contextual, and communicative approach can positively impact student motivation and engagement. (Masdianti, 2021), for example, emphasizes the role of teacher humor in fostering a friendly and enjoyable learning atmosphere in EFL classes as an effective strategy capable of creating more intimate interactions and a conducive learning environment.

Based on these conditions, this study begins with the problem of low student engagement in English learning at SMP Negeri 2 Utan, which negatively impacts their learning motivation and academic achievement. Current learning strategies have not fully addressed students' contextual needs to create a learning environment that encourages active engagement, both emotionally, intellectually, and behaviorally.

These strategies can include the use of digital media, language games, project-based learning, or methods adapted to the local context. Creativity in teaching is considered crucial for breaking student boredom and increasing interest in learning English. Student Engagement, then, refers to students' active cognitive, affective, and behavioral involvement (Fredricks et al., 2004).

This engagement is influenced by teacher strategies and the quality of classroom interactions. Previous research has shown that creative teaching tends to increase engagement because it creates a fun and meaningful learning environment. "EFL classroom" is a specific term referring to English learning in countries where English is not the primary language, and "Rural context" signifies the unique geographic, social, and cultural setting that significantly influences teaching strategies and student responses.

The first question, regarding the creative teaching strategies used by teachers, is grounded in the theory of contextual and creative learning in EFL (Richards, 2013); The second question, regarding student engagement, refers to the engagement model by (Fredricks et al., 2004), which divides engagement into affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions; The third question, regarding factors supporting and inhibiting strategy implementation, draws on the ecological theory of learning (Bronfenbrenner, 2020; Mercer, 2018, which views the learning process as part of a system that influences each other: the individual, the classroom, the school, and the socio-cultural environment.

Thus, this study aims not only to describe teachers' teaching practices but also to understand their meaning and the challenges faced in implementing them. The findings of this study are expected to enrich the literature on creative teaching strategies in rural Indonesian contexts and provide an empirical basis for developing policies and teacher training that are more adaptive to local needs.

This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the study of student engagement in EFL contexts, particularly in rural Indonesia with its unique social, economic, and cultural characteristics. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for teachers in similar areas in developing more contextual and effective learning approaches, as well as provide input for educational policymakers regarding the development of teacher training programs that are responsive to local conditions.

Method

In a qualitative approach, the focus of research is directed at an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena in their natural context. This research starts from the perspective that student engagement in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is not solely the result of teaching methods, but rather a reflection of the interaction between teacher strategies, student characteristics, classroom atmosphere, and local social and cultural values (Fredricks et al., 2004; Almukhail, 2020) Therefore, exploring creative teaching strategies in the context of a rural school like SMP Negeri 2 Utan requires a qualitative approach to fully understand the social, affective, and pedagogical nuances that influence student engagement.

Research Design

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study design. The case study was chosen because it allows the researchers to explore in-depth the phenomenon of student engagement in English learning in one specific location, namely SMP Negeri 2 Utan. This approach is naturalistic and interpretive, focusing on the subjective understanding and meaning given by participants to their experiences (Tisdell, 2009; Mali, 2023)

Time and Place of the Research

This research was conducted on April 21, 2025, at SMP Negeri 2 Utan, located in Dusun Labuhan Padi, Kecamatan Utan, Sumbawa Regency. This location was chosen because it represents the context of junior high schools in coastal and rural areas with limited infrastructure and high socio-cultural diversity. Data were collected in class 7B, which consists of 30 students from diverse residential backgrounds: Dusun Labuhan Padi, Desa Pukat, Desa Labuhan Bajo, Dusun Jarongko, Karang Anyar, Dusun Labuhan Bua, Kecamatan Utan, and Dusun Penyorong.

Data Sources

The rationale for selecting SMP 2 Utan, Sumbawa Regency, as the location for the study was based on several considerations. First, geographically and demographically, Sumbawa

is a relatively remote area and less exposed to modern educational approaches compared to urban areas. Many teachers still use conventional methods due to limited resources, training, and access to technology. This results in many students being less motivated to learn English.

Second, based on initial observations and informal discussions with several teachers at SMP 2 Utan, it was found that student motivation in English lessons remains relatively low. Many students consider English a difficult subject and irrelevant to their daily lives. This situation highlights the urgency of exploring more deeply how more creative teaching strategies can address this issue.

Third, to date, there has been little research specifically examining the relationship between teacher teaching strategies and student motivation in a local context like Sumbawa. Therefore, this study is novel because it seeks to provide a new perspective from a rarely researched geographic context. The findings of this study are expected to enrich the academic literature and provide concrete solutions for English language education practices in areas facing similar challenges. The three research questions posed in this study draw on relevant theoretical frameworks:

Research Target and Subjects

The target of this study was creative teaching strategies and the level of student engagement in English learning. The research subjects consisted of one English teacher teaching 30 students in class 7B.

The subject selection technique used purposive sampling, which involves deliberately selecting subjects based on specific criteria relevant to the research focus. Teachers were selected because of their role as implementers of teaching strategies, while students were chosen as the direct recipients of these strategies. Several students were also selected for interviews based on the diversity of their classroom participation (active, moderate, and passive) to ensure a diversity of perspectives.

Research Procedures

The research implementation procedure was carried out sequentially, starting with Initial Preparation, such as obtaining research permits

from the school, compiling research instruments (observation sheets, interview guidelines, and open-ended questionnaires), and determining the observation and interview schedule. Data Processing and Analysis included transcribing interview results and recording observations, coding data to identify patterns, and analyzing them thematically to draw themes and conclusions.

Research Instruments

The primary instrument was the researcher herself, supported by a participant observation sheet (to record teacher-student interactions and classroom dynamics). Semi-structured interview guides (for teachers and students) and open-ended questionnaires (containing exploratory questions regarding learning experiences).

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: limited participant observation, which directly recorded teaching strategies and student responses; open-ended questionnaires, which provided space for students to freely and in-depth express their personal views; and semi-structured interviews to explore teacher and student perceptions and the background to strategy use.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, a method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) that emerge from qualitative data. This method is particularly suitable when researchers want to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, or perspectives on a phenomenon. (Guest et al., 2014) in Applied Thematic Analysis, the thematic analysis process is carried out through several systematic stages. The first stage is data familiarization, in which researchers repeatedly read raw data such as interview transcripts or field notes to understand their content and context and make initial notes (memories) about emerging ideas or patterns. Next, researchers develop a codebook containing a list of codes, operational definitions, and relevant data examples. This codebook can be deductive, derived from the theory or research question, or

inductive, developing directly from the data. Afterward, the data is coded by marking relevant sections of the data according to existing codes, either manually or with the aid of qualitative analysis software. The next stage is the identification of initial themes, in which codes with similarities are categorized into broader themes. These initial themes are then reviewed and refined to ensure their alignment with the raw data, merge overlapping themes, or break down overly broad themes. At this stage, if the research is conducted by more than one researcher, intercoder reliability is checked. Next, researchers move on to the presentation and interpretation of themes, explaining each theme with a rich narrative, supplemented with direct quotes from the data, and connecting it to theory and previous research. Finally, findings are validated using techniques such as member checking, peer debriefing, or audit trails to ensure the validity and credibility of the research results. This approach emphasizes process transparency and analytical consistency, making it particularly suitable for applied research that requires clear documentation of steps.

To enhance validity, source triangulation (teacher and student) and technique triangulation (observation, interviews, and questionnaires) were used. The researcher also applied reflexivity to minimize interpretive bias. Theoretical basis (grand theory). This research is based on the following theoretical frameworks: (1) Student Engagement Theory by (Fredricks et al., 2004), which divides engagement into three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioral.

(2) Vygotsky's Social-Constructivist Learning Theory (1978) emphasizes the importance of social interaction, scaffolding, and cultural context in the learning process. (3) The Humanistic Approach to Learning (Rogers, 1969), which emphasizes the importance of a supportive classroom atmosphere, interpersonal relationships, and positive emotions as triggers for engagement, and (4) Studies on Creative and Contextual Teaching Strategies (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Richards & Pun, 2022) form the basis for exploring innovative teaching practices in the Asian context.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study were presented based on the triangulation of data from observations, interviews, and questionnaires, and are analyzed thematically.

1. Teachers' Creative Teaching Strategies

The following are some key findings related to the creative teaching strategies implemented by English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Utan, classified by thematic categories from the data analysis.

a. Praise as a Trigger for Learning Enthusiasm

Teachers' praise, such as "good," "great," and "keep going," proved to be a key motivating factor. Classroom observations and student interviews revealed that praise fostered self-confidence and encouraged students to try and participate, even when they were unsure of their answers. "When I'm praised, I feel happy and want to keep answering." (Student Interview 3)

b. Educational Games

Teachers used various creative strategies such as educational games, visual media, and group discussions. These strategies successfully created a fun and engaging learning environment, which was an important trigger for encouraging active student engagement. "If I learn using pictures and games, it sinks in more quickly." (Student Interview 7)

c. Preliminary Activities as Focus Boosters

Light question-and-answer games conducted by teachers before the start of class have been shown to improve student focus and readiness. This also creates a more relaxed classroom atmosphere and reduces anxiety in English lessons. "If we play guessing games or quick questions at the beginning of the lesson, I don't get sleepy." (Student Interview 5)

d. The Effect of Music on Learning

Several students reported feeling more comfortable and relaxed when studying while listening to English songs, especially during activities like reading or writing. "When I hear

English songs, I want to know the meaning."(Student Interview 9)

e. Group Assignments Increase Collaboration and Engagement

Group assignments not only help students understand the material but also encourage them to actively interact with their peers. This is important in fostering a sense of shared responsibility and fostering intrinsic motivation. "When I learn English using games, I don't get bored. Especially when there are group competitions, it's fun!"

The results of the innovative teaching techniques used by the English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Utan can be connected to a number of theories and earlier studies. First, the humanistic motivation theory of Rogers (1969), which highlights the value of positive reinforcement for boosting students' self-esteem and intrinsic motivation, is consistent with the use of praise as a stimulant for learning passion. Research by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) further supports this, demonstrating that praise and other emotional support from teachers can greatly boost student involvement.

Second, educational games and entertaining pre-activities are pertinent to the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach (Philp & Duchesne, 2016), which aims to enhance students' cognitive and affective engagement through interaction through enjoyable tasks. This tactic also backs up the findings of Richards & Pun (2022), who stress how crucial it is for teachers to be creative when offering a range of teaching strategies in order to keep students interested.

Third, using music in the classroom reinforces Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences theory, especially musical intelligence, which can enhance students' vocabulary and cultural awareness while creating a more laid-back learning environment. Additionally, Widodo (2016) discovered that in rural settings, incorporating cultural components and creative media into language instruction can boost students' motivation.

Fourth, cooperative group projects support Vygotsky's (1978) Social-Constructivism theory, which holds that peer-to-peer learning is

facilitated by social interaction and cooperation in groups. Additionally, Mercer (2016) stressed that students' affective and social involvement can be strengthened by contextual support from classmates and teachers.

Therefore, the results of this study confirm earlier research showing that teachers' innovative approaches such as praise, games, music, and group projects are essential to creating an enjoyable, encouraging, and inspiring learning environment, particularly in rural EFL environments.

2. Student Involvement

Student engagement in the learning process at SMP Negeri 2 Utan is clearly reflected through the English teacher's implementation of various creative teaching strategies. These findings can be explained using (Fredricks et al., 2004) student engagement framework, which divides engagement into three main dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioral.

a. Affective Dimension

Strategies such as the use of praise, educational games, and music in learning have been shown to be effective in eliciting positive affective responses from students. They feel happy, appreciated, and emotionally motivated when teachers offer praise such as "great" or "keep going," which builds self-confidence. Students become more enthusiastic about learning because the classroom atmosphere feels supportive and enjoyable. "When I'm praised, I feel happy and want to keep answering."(Student Interview 3). "If I learn using pictures and games, it sinks in my head more quickly."(Student Interview 7) Similarly, the use of English songs not only creates a relaxed atmosphere but also fosters students' curiosity about the song's content and the language used. "When I hear English songs, I want to know what they mean."(Student Interview 9).

b. Cognitive Dimension

In the cognitive dimension, strategies such as group discussions, pair assignments, and learning through songs provide opportunities for students to process information more deeply. They don't just passively receive material but actively

participate in understanding the lesson content, developing arguments, and explaining their opinions to their peers. This kind of collaborative work allows for the social construction of knowledge, which strengthens students' conceptual understanding. "When we study with a group, I understand better because I can ask my friends." (Student Interview 4).

c. Behavioral Dimension

Behavioral-wise, strategies such as pre-lesson question-and-answer games, group quizzes, and the use of interactive visuals have been successful in increasing student participation. They become more active in answering questions, raising their hands, and taking the initiative in class activities. "If we start the lesson with a guessing game or a quick question quiz, I don't get sleepy." (Student Interview 5). "When I learn English using games, I don't get bored. Especially if there are group competitions, it's fun!" (Student Interview 6). Teachers also use light activities at the beginning of the lesson as a way to focus students' attention and build engagement from the start, which is very helpful in mentally preparing students for new material.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Based on the ecological learning theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Mercer, 2016), it was found that individual, family, and social environmental factors influence student engagement.

a. Supporting Factors

Family support was found to be an important external factor in creating learning readiness. Several students mentioned that their parents told them to wake up early, shower, eat breakfast, and go to school, and provided them with pocket money as a form of positive reinforcement. "Every morning, my mother tells me to get up, get dressed, and sometimes helps with homework." (Student Interview 2). Besides, a supportive classroom environment, such as having helpful desk mates, friendly teachers, and open communication, also strongly encourages learning engagement. "My desk mate likes to help

me when I don't understand." "The English teacher is friendly and patient, so I'm not afraid to ask questions." (Interviews with Students 4 and 6)

These findings align with previous theories and research on student engagement. Based on Ecological Learning Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Mercer, 2016), student learning engagement is influenced by interactions within the immediate environment (microsystem), including the family and school contexts. Parental support such as waking children early, preparing breakfast, helping with homework, and providing pocket money serves as a form of positive reinforcement that directly encourages learning readiness. This aligns with Mercer's (2016) view that emotional and practical support from family can increase motivation and sustained learning engagement. Similarly, Vygotsky's (1978) Social-Constructivist Theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in the learning process. The presence of deskmates willing to help understand the lesson, as well as a friendly and patient teacher who fosters open communication, are forms of social scaffolding that help students learn within their zone of proximal development. Such interactions not only facilitate cognitive understanding but also reduce anxiety and foster confidence in participating in class. This finding is consistent with previous research (Fredricks et al., 2004; Widodo, 2016), which shows that positive relationships with teachers, collaboration between students, and family involvement in daily learning routines can create a safe and motivating learning environment, thereby strengthening students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement in the EFL learning context.

b. Inhibiting Factors

One of the main challenges teachers face in implementing creative teaching strategies at SMP Negeri 2 Utan is the students' complex socioeconomic background. Interviews with teachers revealed that some students prefer not to attend school because they are helping their parents work in the fields or at sea. This situation reflects the family's limited financial resources, which require children to contribute to household

chores. "There are students who, during harvest or fishing season, prefer to accompany their parents to school. Sometimes we have to go directly to their homes to remind them of the importance of attendance, especially when exams are coming up." (Teacher Interview). Teachers even explained that during exam periods, they must actively visit students' homes to ensure their attendance. These efforts are often followed by direct discussions with parents to convince them of the importance of formal education for their children's future. "We try to communicate with parents, explaining that exams are important. Sometimes they allow it after we explain it carefully." (Teacher Interview)

These findings can be linked to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979), which emphasizes that student development and engagement are influenced by multiple environmental layers, from the immediate environment (microsystem), such as family and school, to the broader socio-economic context (macrosystem). Limited family socio-economic conditions, which require children to help with farm work or fishing, demonstrate the direct influence of the family microsystem on student attendance and engagement in school. This also aligns with UNESCO's (2018) view that economic barriers are a major factor affecting access to and sustainability of education in rural areas.

Furthermore, teachers' active home visits and discussions with parents reflect the school's role as a crucial agent in the mesosystem, bridging the interaction between families and formal education. This communication strategy aligns with the findings of by (Pasutri & Yeni, 2022), who showed that collaboration between teachers and parents in coastal areas can reduce student absenteeism, particularly during the harvest or fishing seasons. Furthermore, teacher interventions are also relevant to Vygotsky's Social-Constructivist Theory (1978), where social support (scaffolding) comes not only from academic interactions in the classroom but also from teacher encouragement outside the classroom, ensuring students remain on the path of formal learning. Thus, the socioeconomic challenges at SMP Negeri 2 Utan demonstrate the importance of cross-contextual interventions to

maintain student engagement in EFL learning in rural areas.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that creative teaching strategies implemented by English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Utan significantly increased student engagement in learning. Strategies such as verbal praise, educational games, early-class activities, the use of music, and collaborative learning proved effective in encouraging student engagement across three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Students felt happier, more active, and more motivated when these strategies were implemented in a fun and supportive learning environment.

In addition to teaching strategies, external supporting factors such as family support and a positive classroom social environment also contributed to learning success. Conversely, inhibiting factors such as socioeconomic conditions that require students to help their parents work pose a serious challenge to maintaining consistent student attendance and engagement in school.

In a rural context like Sumbawa Regency, the teacher's role is particularly complex, as they must address social aspects outside the classroom, including building communication with students' families. This demonstrates that the success of learning strategies depends heavily on a deep understanding of students' local contexts, as explained in the ecological learning theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The findings of this study indicate that creative teacher teaching strategies, such as praise, educational games, introductory activities, music, and group assignments, have been shown to increase student motivation, engagement, and readiness to learn. Praise, as a form of positive reinforcement, has a direct impact on increasing student self-confidence, in line with humanistic educational theory (Rogers, 1969), which emphasizes the importance of a supportive emotional atmosphere in learning. This is also consistent with research by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), which states that emotional support from teachers plays a crucial role in building student engagement.

Furthermore, the use of educational games and visual media provides multisensory stimuli that strengthen understanding, in line with Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, which emphasizes the diversity of student learning styles. These results are supported by research by Philp and Duchesne (2016), which emphasizes that enjoyable, task-based activities increase student active participation in language learning. Light-hearted introductory activities, such as quick quizzes or icebreakers, have also been shown to be effective in reducing student anxiety and increasing focus, in line with the concept of positive language education (Mercer, 2016).

Furthermore, music in learning has been shown to lower the affective filter, as explained by Krashen in his theory of second language acquisition. This makes students more relaxed and open to new language input. Group assignments that encourage collaboration and healthy competition also support Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and peer scaffolding in accelerating cognitive development. These findings also align with Widodo's (2016) research in a rural Indonesian context, which demonstrated that teacher creativity in utilizing collaborative strategies based on local contexts can foster students' intrinsic motivation.

Thus, creative teacher strategies are not simply variations in teaching methods, but rather a form of pedagogical adaptation to students' emotional, cognitive, and social needs in rural EFL contexts. This confirms that teacher creativity is a key factor in maintaining learning engagement, despite socioeconomic barriers.

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