Research and Innovation in Applied Linguistics [RIAL]
http://jurnal.poliupg.ac.id/index.php/RIAL-EJ/index
rial_ej@poliupg.ac.id
Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan KM 10, Tamalanrea, 90245
e-ISSN: 2964-5344
Volume 3, Issue 2, (2025)
Page 237-256

ISSN 2964-5344

Research Article

The Challenges and Best Practices of English Language Teaching in Indonesian Secondary School: A Systematic Literature Review

Mona AZAHRA[1*] **Ellis TAMELA**[3]
Tryanti ABDULRAHMAN[2]

Corresponding author: *monaazahra6@gmail.com*
DOI: https://doi.org/10.31963/rial.v3i2.5478
Received: 28/05/2025 Revised: 13/07/2025 Accepted: 10/08/2025

ABSTRACT
This systematic literature review of seventy-one studies provides a comprehensive overview of English language teaching in Indonesian senior and vocational high schools over the last 10 years. Using the Publish or Perish (PoP) tool, a systematic search was conducted through Google Scholar and CrossRef. The study identified three main themes: current trends, challenges encountered by teachers and students, and best practices. Most of the studies were qualitative and published in SINTA-indexed journals. The result highlighted several challenges, including barriers to teaching and learning, Inadequate infrastructure, concerns about student well-being, and low student motivation and engagement. Meanwhile, best practices include continuous teacher development, student-centered approaches, technology integration, language skill development, and support from schools and families. Tailoring sustainable implementation to the local context has the potential to improve teaching quality. The study highlights the need for coordinated collaboration among policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed recommendations.

Keywords: *Best practices, Challenges, ELT, Secondary school*

To cite this article: Azahra, M., Abdulrahman, T., Tamela, E. (2025). The Challenges and Best Practices of English Language Teaching in Indonesian Secondary School: A Systematic Literature Review. *Research and Innovation in Applied Linguistics [RIAL]*, Vol 3 (2), 237-256. https://doi.org/10.31963/rial.v3i2.5478

[1] Universitas Islam As-Syafi'iyah, Jakarta, INDONESIA. Email: monaazahra6@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9493-1452
[2] Universitas Islam As-Syafi'iyah, Jakarta, INDONESIA. Email: tryanti.abdulrahman@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3329-0505
[3] Universitas Islam As-Syafi'iyah, Jakarta, INDONESIA. Email: ellis.fki@uia.ac.id
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7726-1371

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has shown considerable progress in English language teaching through government involvement in teacher professional development, the development of the curriculum, and the implementation of English as the medium of instruction in several schools (Daud, 2024). In schools, English helps students connect with the external world, obtain information, and enhance their communication abilities (Nasrullah et al., 2021). Boy Jon et al. (2021) emphasize that Indonesians mainly learn English to communicate globally, building intercultural connections and expanding interaction in the international community.

Despite the development of English language teaching in Indonesia, educators continue to face challenges such as time constraints, low student motivation, limited resources, frequent curriculum changes, and inadequate support and facilities (Adam et al., 2021; Boy Jon et al., 2021; Febtiningsih et al., 2021; Nanda & Azmy, 2020; Saefurrohman et al., 2024). Collectively, these challenges show the complexity of creating an effective learning environment. To address such challenges, English language teaching should incorporate best practices, such as engaging interactive methods, encouraging active student participation, applying technology to enhance motivation, and offering the necessary support to students (Purtanto et al., 2023; Sari, 2021).

"Challenges and best practices shape the landscape of English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools."

Previous research on English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools has tended to examine challenges and best practices separately. Adam et al. (2021) and Febtiningsih et al. (2021) have specifically pointed out the challenges that teachers encounter when teaching writing skills, such as limited time and inadequate teaching methods. Conversely, certain research highlights curriculum reform, teacher training, and technological integration as essential strategies for enhancing learning quality (Saefurrohman et al., 2024). Strategies based on cooperative learning have shown effectiveness in enhancing student motivation and participation. Moreover, authentic materials are regarded as having the potential to boost engagement among both teachers and students (Daud, 2024; Semara Putra et al., 2022).

Existing research predominantly consists of individual case studies that tend to address isolated aspects of English language teaching. To date, there is a lack of comprehensive investigations that holistically examine both the challenges and the corresponding solutions across senior high schools and vocational institutions. This identified gap provides the rationale for conducting a systematic literature review (SLR) that maps current trends, recurring challenges, and effective teaching practices in both senior high schools and vocational schools. By synthesizing findings from a wide range of studies, this SLR seeks to show effective pedagogical strategies while also identifying areas that remain underexplored. To achieve this objective, this paper explored three key questions:

(1) How has the research landscape on English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools evolved?

(2) What challenges are reported in the literature regarding English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools?
(3) What strategies and best practices are documented for improving English teaching outcomes in this context?

METHOD

Research design

This research employed a systematic literature review (SLR), a rigorous and structured method for collecting, critically evaluating, synthesizing, and presenting empirical evidence from multiple studies addressing a specific research question or topic (Pati & Lorusso, 2018; Ubale & Jadhav, 2021). This study employed qualitative synthesis approach to the findings, patterns, and gaps in the analyzed articles. The researchers did not use meta-analysis and bibliometrics in this study due to the significant variation in design, methodology, and reporting methods contained in most of the reviewed literature. A qualitative synthesis approach was chosen to capture in depth the conceptual and practical contributions offered by each study, as well as to identify patterns and gaps in research in the context of English language teaching in senior and vocational high schools. This approach ensures a greater degree of reliability and accuracy in the findings (Pati & Lorusso, 2018).

The review process followed three key stages: planning, conducting, and reporting (Basri et al., 2023). In the planning stage, research questions were formulated, and a review protocol was developed to guide the process. This protocol outlined the databases to be used, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the steps for data extraction and analysis, ensuring a systematic and focused approach. During the conducting stage, a structured search was carried out using the Publish or Perish tool with Google Scholar and CrossRef as data sources. Studies were screened based on relevance to English Language Teaching in Indonesian secondary schools, publication within the past 10 years, peer-reviewed status, and SINTA accreditation. Duplicate and ineligible studies were excluded, and relevant data were extracted from the remaining literature. In the final stage, findings were reported through a thematic synthesis of the selected studies. Patterns and key themes were identified and organized to show both effective teaching practices and recurring challenges in the field. This stage provided a clear summary of the current state of research and offered insights to support further study and practical improvements in secondary ELT in Indonesia.

Search strategy

A systematic search using Google Scholar and CrossRef as data sources was carried out using the Publish or Perish (PoP) tool. PoP was selected for its ability to organize searches, extract metadata, and streamline data management. Google Scholar provides comprehensive access to periodicals, dissertations, and books. CrossRef ensures credible and accurate references by providing verified metadata with DOIs.

The search terms included: *English Language Teaching*, *ELT*, *best practice*, *effective teaching*, *Indonesia*, *secondary school*, and *senior high school* to identify best practices. Meanwhile, keywords used to explore challenges included *English Language Teaching*, *ELT*, *challenges*, *difficulties*, *barriers*, *Indonesia, secondary school,* and *senior high school*.

The relevant literature was systematically screened based on clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria established before the review process. The following table presents the criteria used:

Table 1.
Criteria for Selecting Relevant Studies

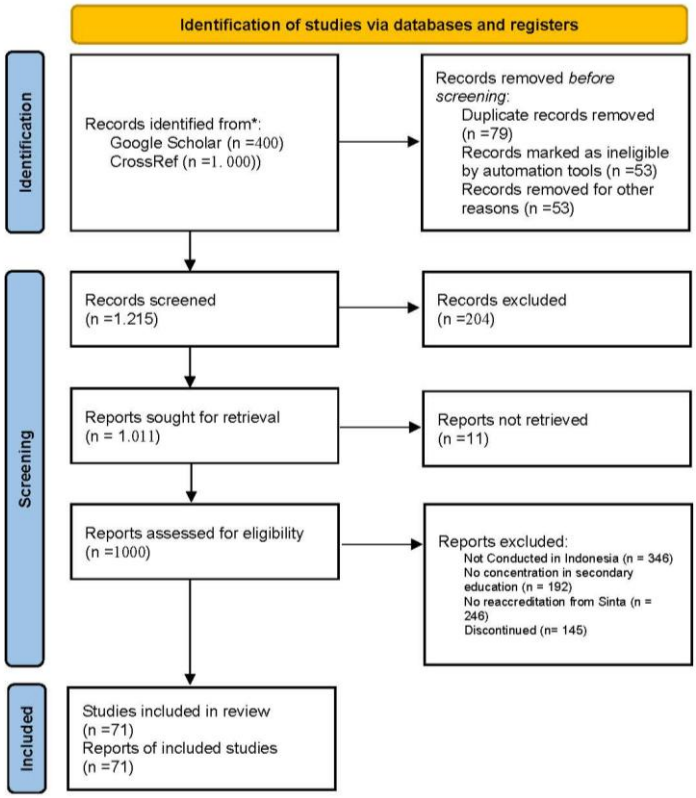
Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Peer-reviewed articles only	Non-peer-reviewed sources
Studies conducted in Indonesia	Studies were not conducted in Indonesia
Published within the last 10 years	Studies published more than 10 years ago
Focus on secondary education, specifically Senior High School and Vocational High School	Studies focusing on primary, junior high school, or higher education levels

Data collection

Data collection was conducted using the Publish or Perish (PoP) tool, with Google Scholar and CrossRef serving as primary sources. Once gathered, the data were extracted into spreadsheets by reviewing abstracts and filtering studies based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Relevant information was systematically compiled using a standardized extraction form within the spreadsheet, ensuring consistency and accuracy. The extracted data included key details such as author names, publication year, research methodology, school level, and findings related to challenges and best practices in English language teaching at secondary schools in Indonesia. Additionally, studies were categorized according to their accreditation level in the SINTA database, ranging from SINTA 1 to SINTA 6.

From both databases, a total of 1,400 journal articles were identified—400 from Google Scholar and 1,000 from CrossRef. Before filtering, several records were removed based on predefined criteria, including 79 duplicate entries, 53 records marked as ineligible by automated tools, and 53 others excluded for various reasons. After this initial screening, 1,215 records remained for further processing, though 204 were later excluded from analysis. Subsequently, 1,011 reports were reviewed for potential inclusion, but only 11 were deemed suitable for evaluation. During the final screening phase, additional exclusions were made: 346 reports were removed because the studies were conducted outside Indonesia, 192 because they did not focus on high school education, 246 due to a lack of SINTA accreditation, and 145 because the studies had been discontinued. Ultimately, 71 newly identified studies were included in the final analysis. The process of extracting and screening can be further illustrated using the following flowchart:

Figure 1.
PRISMA flow diagram of the paper screening process



Data Analysis

This study analyzed seventy-one scholarly papers, selected through inclusion and exclusion criteria, using a qualitative thematic analysis approach as proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which consists of six systematic phases: familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. . This process aimed to identify recurring patterns in the challenges and best practices in English language teaching in secondary schools in Indonesia.

(1) Familiarization with the Data

Each article was read thoroughly to gain a deep understanding of essential details for example the author's name, year of publication, research method, level of education studied, and findings related to ELT strategies and challenges. Notes were taken to highlight preliminary observations.

(2) Generating Initial Codes

Key information on teaching approaches, student learning strategies, and barriers faced by teachers and students was systematically coded. This information was organized into a data extraction table using a spreadsheet to ensure consistency and support further analysis.

(3) Searching for Themes

The generated codes were then examined and grouped into potential themes. Codes with similar meanings or focus were clustered together to explore recurring patterns across the dataset.

(4) Reviewing Themes
Themes were reviewed based on coded quotations and the entire dataset. At this stage, adjustments were made to ensure that each theme was distinguishable and sufficiently supported by evidence. A thematic mapping was done as a visual representation of the structure and connections of the themes.

(5) Defining and Naming Themes
A continuous process of analysis was employed to finalize the scope and content of the themes. Themes were clearly defined and named based on the core ideas they represented. As a result, three major themes were identified regarding current trends, four themes related to challenges, and five themes describing best practices in secondary ELT in Indonesia.

(6) Producing the Report
The final stage involved synthesizing the themes into a narrative discussion, comparing and integrating findings across studies within each theme. The analysis explored the effectiveness of various strategies and the context of their implementation. Thematic descriptions were supported by appropriate citations from the literature to enhance credibility and strengthen the arguments.

FINDINGS

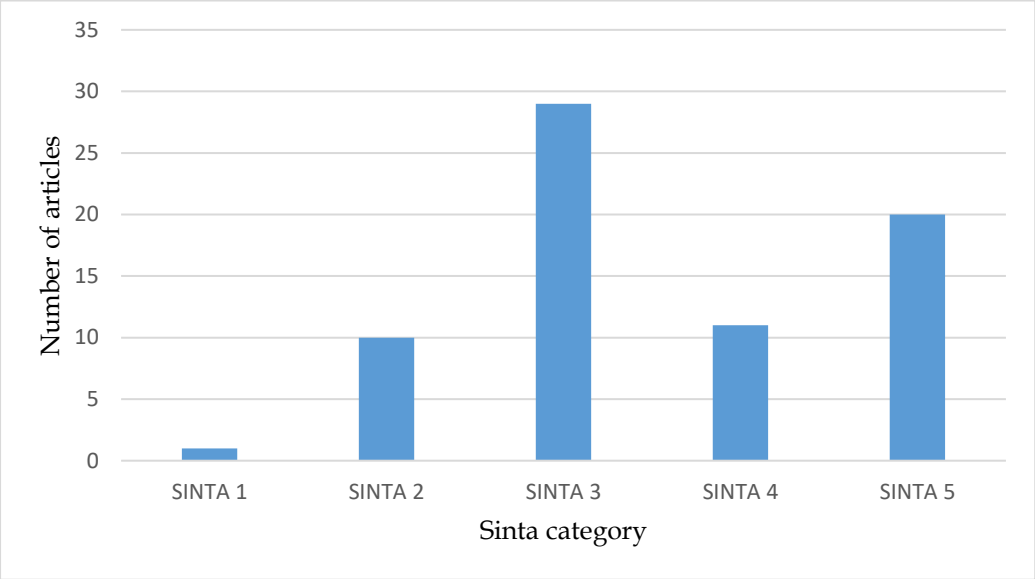
A total of seventy-one scholarly papers met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed in this review. The analysis focused on trends in English language teaching research in Indonesian secondary schools, including journal accreditation (SINTA), publication years, research methods, and education levels involved. Two major themes emerged: challenges and best practices. The challenges were categorized into teaching and learning issues, access and infrastructure limitations, student well-being and development, and student motivation and engagement. Meanwhile, best practices included teacher professional development, student-centered and active learning, technology-enhanced instruction, language skill development, and parental or institutional support.

Trends in Research on English Language Teaching in Indonesian Secondary Schools

Distribution of Sinta Accredited Journal

As shown in Figure 2, seventy-one scholarly papers were selected for inclusion in this SLR. Based on the accreditation level, 1 article was published in a SINTA 1-accredited journal, and 10 articles were published in SINTA 2 journals. Most of the literature, 29 articles, was from SINTA 3-accredited journals. Furthermore, there were 10 articles published in SINTA 4 journals, and 20 articles in SINTA 5 journals. This data provides an overview of the distribution of literature based on journal accreditation level within the scope of the reviewed research.

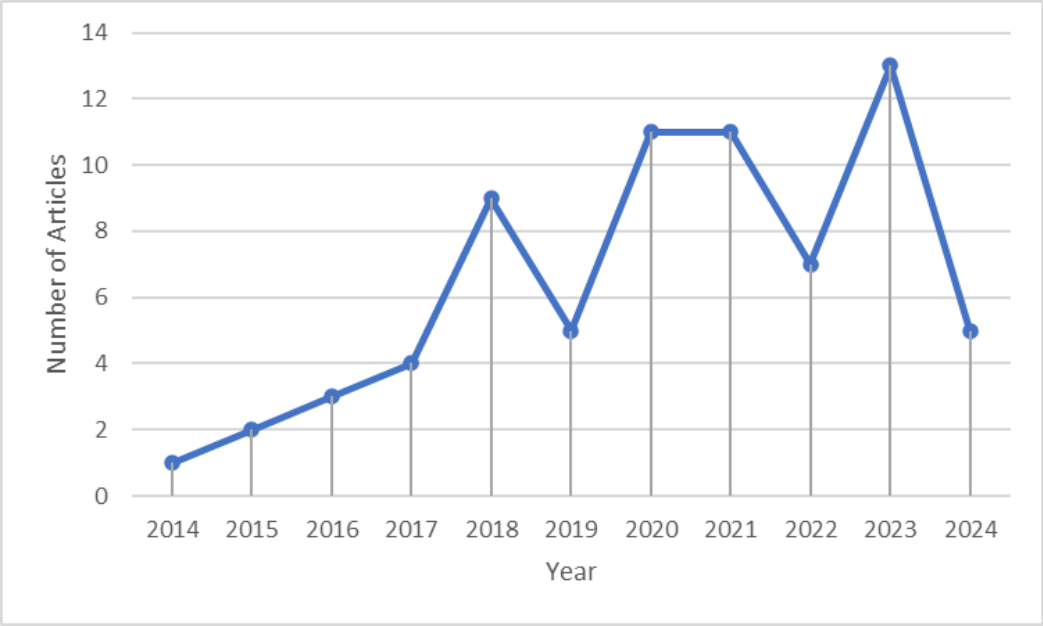
Figure 2.
Chart of The Journal Accreditation of The Selected Literature



Distribution of Research by Year

The distribution of research relating to challenges and best practices in English language teaching at the secondary school level in Indonesia from 2014 to 2024 is shown in Figure 3.

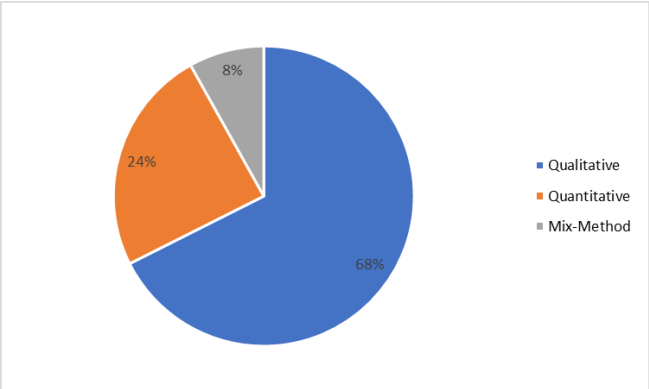
Figure 3.
Number of Studies by Year



Research Methodologies Applied in The Studies

Figure 4 presents the distribution of research methods employed in the analysed studies. The figure illustrates that the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches are represented in varying proportions among the types of research analysed in this research. Qualitative research dominated with a percentage of 68%, followed by quantitative research with 24% and mixed methods with 8%. Methods used include classroom action research (CAR), research and development (R&D), and comparative studies in the qualitative research category. Meanwhile, the quantitative research category includes survey methods, pre-experimental methods, and quasi-experimental methods.

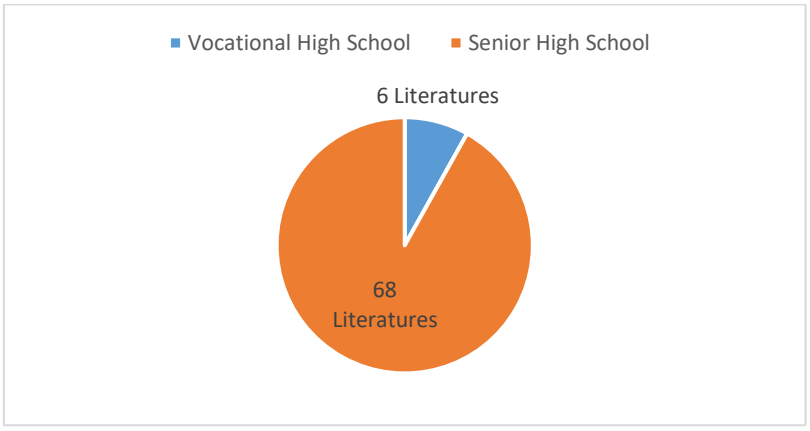
Figure 4.
Research Methods Distribution



The Education Level of The Sample Involved in The Literature

Figure 5 illustrates that the majority of analyzed literature (68) used samples from senior high schools, indicating a dominant research focus on this group. In contrast, only six studies involved vocational high school students, highlighting a significant gap in research at this level. This disparity may stem from factors such as accessibility, data availability, and differences in curriculum and educational approaches.

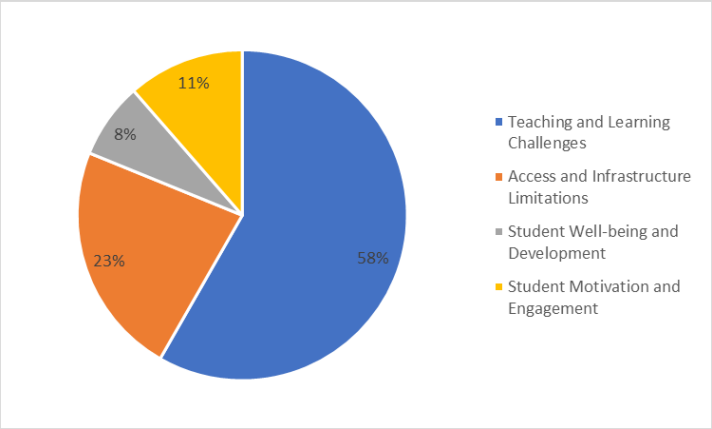
Figure 5.
Comparison of The Number of Literature Between Senior High School and Vocational High School



Challenges

The second research question focused on identifying the major challenges encountered by teachers in teaching English in secondary schools. Based on the analysis of the selected literature, the primary challenges can be classified into several categories: teaching and learning challenges (58%), access and infrastructure limitations (23%), student well-being and development (8%), and student motivation and engagement (11%).

Figure 6.
Distribution Number of Challenges



Teaching and Learning Challenges

The most prevalent challenges in English language teaching pertain to the teaching and learning aspects. The primary challenges encountered by students include vocabulary limitations, inadequate grammatical understanding, and a lack of proficiency in sentence structure. Variations in students' abilities, a paucity of fundamental knowledge, and a dearth of motivation, evidenced by a failure to complete assignments and exams, further compound the difficulties faced by students. Along with pedagogues encounter a number of challenges, including insufficient training, difficulties in classroom management, particularly in the integrated teaching of language skills, an excess of work, and insufficient time to deliver material thoroughly. Furthermore, the absence of administrative support and the dearth of effective strategies to address students' varied learning styles pose significant challenges. These challenges are interconnected, exerting a detrimental influence on the quality of teaching and the attainment of English learning outcomes within the classroom environment.

Access and Infrastructure Limitation

A total of 23% of the literature indicated that limited infrastructure and access are the main challenges in English language teaching (ELT). The challenges confronting learners and educators pertain to the inadequacy of educational facilities, the paucity of internet connectivity, and the dearth of essential devices such as smartphones or laptops. The issue of digital competence is a significant challenge in the educational sector, impacting both

students and educators. This challenge delays the effective integration of technology as an educational resource. Educators frequently possess limited experience in the domain of information and communication technology (ICT), which often leads to suboptimal utilization of digital methodologies in educational settings. Funding and teaching resource limitations must be considered when improving education infrastructure. These challenges have a detrimental effect on learning effectiveness, thus necessitating the development of new strategies to overcome these obstacles and enhance education.

Student Well-being and Development

Around 8% of the report, students' readiness to learn is significantly impacted by their well-being. Participation and focus in English language teaching might be hampered by a lack of confidence, anxiety about making mistakes, and exhaustion from workload and time limits. To raise the standard of learning, supportive learning settings and anxiety-reduction techniques are required.

Student Motivation and Engagement

The analysis revealed that a total of 11% of the literature highlighted a lack of motivation and engagement on the part of students concerning English language teaching. Factors including motivation, the presence of boredom, attention-seeking behaviour, and distractions from the media have all been posited as contributing factors to this lack of active participation. The development of more interactive and engaging methodologies has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on student engagement in the learning process.

Best Practices

Question three is about strategies and best practices for improving English language teaching outcomes. The literature provides insight into effective approaches to English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools. The analysis identified five main thematic categories of best practices.

Table 2.
Thematic Categories and Best Practice Strategies in English Language Teaching

No.	Thematic Category	Best Practice Strategies	Focus Area	Source
1	Teacher Professional Development and Classroom Management	- Effective Teacher Competency - Management Talk - Engaging Classroom Management	Teacher Quality & Learning Climate	(Jati et al., 2019; Restu et al., 2018; Saleh, 2023)
2	Student-Centered and Active Learning Approaches	- Cooperative Learning - Project-Based Learning - TBLT	Student Engagement & Active Learning	(Hima et al., 2021; Irambona & Kumaidi, 2015; Mu'ammalatun & Wahyuni, 2024; Widayani et al., 2024)

		- Discovery Learning		
3	Technology-Enhanced Language Learning	- Mobile Apps (Quizlet) - YouTube - Google Sites - Nearpod	Technology Integration in ELT	(Inharjanto & Leovani, 2022; Prayogi & Wulandari, 2021; Suharti et al., 2023; Wanda Dian Paramesti Fortuna Dewi et al., 2023)
4	Skill Development in Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Vocabulary	- Oral Feedback - HoPALM - Intuitive-Imitative Pronunciation - Multimedia for Writing - Repetition & Paraphrasing	Language Skills Improvement	(Irawan & Salija, 2017; Saleh, 2023; Sauramanda et al., 2021; Tsuraya, 2020; Uray Siti Annisa Ravi Ardha et al., 2021)
5	Parental and Institutional Support in the Learning Environment	- Institutional Digital Support - Parent Collaboration	Learning Environment & External Support	(Hildianti & Rahayu, 2024)

Teacher Professional Development and Classroom Management

This theme's strategies show how crucial it is to enhance teachers' competencies through ongoing professional development as well as the incorporation of information and communication technology (ICT) into the classroom. To create a more dynamic learning environment that is responsive to the requirements of students, it also requires the use of interactive communication and preventive, corrective, engaging, and successful classroom management techniques. A total of six studies discuss this theme in depth, demonstrating the consistent importance of this approach in improving the quality of English language teaching at the secondary school level.

Student-centered Learning Approaches and Active Learning

The approach emphasizes using authentic materials, such as animated films and visual-audio resources, to enhance student engagement. This theme is presented in seventeen of the literatures, making it the most frequently identified approach in this study, indicating a strong focus on active and student-centered learning strategies in English language teaching in secondary schools. Collaboration and communication skills are developed through role-playing, group projects, and discussion exercises. To promote reflective, participatory, and student-centered learning, techniques including project-based learning, TBLT, substantial reading, and CSR are also used.

Technology Enhanced Language Learning, Reading, Writing

The use of technology in English language learning includes the use of interactive learning tools and effective ICT integration to increase student engagement in the classroom. Applications like Google Sites, Nearpod, YouTube, Quizlet, WhatsApp Group, and animated movies are used to implement the blended learning approach. To make the learning environment more dynamic and participatory, quiz-based collaborative learning methods (QCLS) are also employed. This theme was pointed out in twelve articles found in the literature.

Speaking and Vocabulary Skill Development

The fourteen literatures in this research discuss strategies for developing language skills through a variety of approaches. Language skill development strategies use various approaches to improve language skills. Reducing challenges in online English teaching ensures accessibility and engagement in digital-based learning. The utilization of verbal feedback in conjunction with the HoPALM methodology has been demonstrated to facilitate the refinement of students' receptive skills. Scientific approaches with cooperative learning and integrated listening skills improve understanding and language use. An intuitive approach allows students to internalize phonetic aspects more naturally, and multimedia-based teaching improves writing. Skimming and scanning in reading help develop language skills. Repetition and paraphrasing help comprehension and expression, while grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods provide a structural basis for more systematic language learning. This approach fosters comprehensive language skills and deep understanding.

Parent and Institutional Support in the Learning Environment

This theme indicates that the presence of parental support, institutional support for digital education, and parental collaboration for learning participation are all significant factors in this regard. Research has demonstrated that active parental participation is associated with enhanced student motivation to learn and their capacity to overcome learning challenges, both in online and offline contexts.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review reveals a maturing yet uneven field of English language teaching (ELT) research in Indonesian secondary schools. While the growing body of literature reflects increased academic attention to pedagogical challenges and innovations, the findings raise concerns about representational imbalance, methodological insularity, and contextual misalignment that constrain the field's transformative potential.

One key concern is the persistent overrepresentation of senior high schools as research sites. Despite the national government's push for expanded vocational education, only a small subset of studies addresses English instruction in vocational high schools (Akmal et al., 2021; Asmin, 2019). This skewed focus reflects deeper structural inequities in educational research that prioritize academic-track students while neglecting the linguistic needs and

socio-professional realities of vocational learners. Such omission is problematic, as vocational students often require English for specific purposes (ESP), and overlooking their contexts leaves critical pedagogical and policy gaps.

In terms of research design, the dominance of qualitative methods, comprising sixty-eight percent of the studies, continues to shape how ELT is theorized and interpreted (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Pati & Lorusso, 2018). While these approaches yield valuable insights into classroom dynamics and teacher beliefs, the lack of rigorous mixed-methods or longitudinal designs limits the capacity to generate robust causal inferences or inform scalable interventions. Moreover, the limited use of experimental methods reflects an overreliance on descriptive or subjective findings, with limited engagement in testing or evaluating programmatic outcomes. Without triangulated evidence, current research may perpetuate rather than challenge ineffective teaching paradigms.

Furthermore, challenges in teaching and learning remain the most pressing and consistently reported issues. Students frequently face foundational deficits in vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure (Akmal et al., 2021; Damayanti et al., 2023; Jati et al., 2019). These challenges are exacerbated by large class sizes and undifferentiated instruction that fails to account for learners' diverse readiness levels. From a systemic perspective, these pedagogical constraints are not simply the result of individual teacher shortcomings but are embedded in broader curriculum policies and professional development models that emphasize content delivery over pedagogical flexibility (Fadhliyah et al., 2020; Puspasari et al., 2023; Rasyid et al., 2023). The literature points to a gap between curriculum intent and instructional feasibility, a mismatch that contributes to superficial learning and low proficiency outcomes.

Moreover, teachers report structural constraints that undermine instructional innovation. Overburdened workloads, frequent policy shifts, and minimal institutional support discourage experimentation and reflection (Hidayat et al., 2021; Triyogo & Hamdan, 2018). These findings point to a system that emphasizes teacher compliance over professional agency, limiting the uptake of evidence-based practices even when they are known and accessible. The repeated mention of time constraints, inadequate training, and vague instructional guidelines suggests that reform initiatives remain technocratic rather than developmental in orientation.

In addition, infrastructure-related challenges add another layer of complexity. Although there is increasing emphasis on digital tools in ELT, many schools lack basic internet connectivity and access to devices, particularly in rural or underfunded settings (Dima et al., 2021; Irambona & Kumaidi, 2015; Kurniawan, 2014). This paradox advocating for tech integration amid digital exclusion reflects a broader policy disconnect that favors innovation rhetoric without resolving foundational inequities. Additionally, limited digital literacy among teachers further impedes effective integration (Agustin et al., 2023; Inharjanto & Leovani, 2022). These issues highlight a need to move beyond tool adoption toward systemic digital capacity building.

Related to student motivation and emotional readiness, findings show they remain under-theorized in the reviewed literature. While eleventh percent of studies reference engagement and anxiety issues, few examine the sociocultural and affective dimensions of

language learning in depth (Astuti et al., 2022; Ginting & Kuswandono, 2020; Rohmawati et al., 2023). In many classrooms, performative assessment cultures and monologic instruction discourage risk-taking and self-expression. Without pedagogical approaches that prioritize student voice, autonomy, and emotional safety, motivation-enhancing interventions may have limited efficacy. Additionally, research tends to pathologize disengagement as a student deficiency rather than interrogating classroom practices or systemic stressors that contribute to such outcomes.

Despite these limitations, literature identifies a range of promising practices. Professional development programs that foster teacher reflection, improve classroom management, and encourage student-centered approaches demonstrate measurable impacts on classroom dynamics and student achievement (Restu et al., 2018; Saleh, 2023). However, the sustainability of such programs remains uncertain without institutional commitment to continuous mentoring, follow-up, and school-based learning communities.

Active learning approaches such as project-based learning and TBLT have been widely acknowledged in recent research for enhancing students' ability to work together and engage in real-world language application (Mu'ammalatun & Wahyuni, 2024; Widayani et al., 2024). Yet their scalability is contingent on class size, instructional time, and teacher preparation. When implemented without adequate support, these approaches risk becoming more formalities rather than transformative practices.

Technology use in ELT continues to expand, with tools like Google Sites, Nearpod, and YouTube fostering interactive, multimodal learning (Prayogi & Wulandari, 2021; Suharti et al., 2023). Despite growing interest in educational technology, research often prioritizes tool implementation over critical evaluation of digital pedagogy and its effects on learners. There is a tendency to assume that engagement equals learning, which underscores the need for research that interrogates not only what tools are used, but also how and why they are effective.

The literature also documents effective strategies for developing discrete language skills. Practices such as intuitive pronunciation modeling, oral feedback, multimedia writing instruction, and vocabulary repetition have shown promise in improving proficiency (Irawan & Salija, 2017; Sauramanda et al., 2021). However, few studies offer evidence of long-term retention or integration of these skills across modalities. There remains a lack of research on how these micro-strategies contribute to holistic communicative competence or academic literacy.

Finally, family and institutional support emerged as essential, though underutilized, factors in student success. Parental involvement in language learning remains peripheral in both policy and practice, despite evidence linking it to improved motivation and resilience (Hildianti & Rahayu, 2024). Institutional support often stops at policy rhetoric without enabling mechanisms such as ICT access, teacher collaboration time, or targeted resource allocation. Without deliberate efforts to bridge school-home divides, the broader ecosystem of support for language learners remains fragmented.

In summary, the findings of this review point to a field characterized by theoretical richness but constrained in its methodological and systemic approaches. To move forward, ELT research in Indonesia must expand its focus beyond urban, academic schools; adopt

diverse and rigorous methods; and critically engage with the systemic barriers that limit teaching and learning. The next wave of research should interrogate not only what works, but also for whom, under what conditions, and with what long-term effects.

CONCLUSION

This review highlights the multifaceted challenges facing English language teaching (ELT) in Indonesian secondary schools and the need for context-sensitive, sustainable improvements. Although scholarly interest has grown, research remains unevenly distributed, particularly regarding vocational education. Addressing this imbalance requires broader investigations that represent diverse learner populations and account for the cultural, institutional, and socioeconomic factors shaping English learning. The reviewed literature also underscores the importance of sustained, collaborative teacher professional development, inclusive student-centered pedagogy, purposeful technology integration, and supportive learning environments involving parents and other stakeholders. However, these strategies must be adapted to local conditions rather than implemented as universal solutions. Equitable access to educational resources and attention to students' motivation, engagement, and well-being are essential to ensuring that instructional improvements benefit diverse learners. Future research should examine the effectiveness and sustainability of these approaches across different school contexts, with particular attention to underrepresented vocational schools. Overall, improving ELT in Indonesian secondary education requires coordinated efforts in research, teacher development, curriculum implementation, and educational policy to address persistent disparities and support meaningful, long-term language learning outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author sincerely appreciates everyone who supported the completion of this research. Deep gratitude is especially given to academic advisors and peers for their valuable input and continuous encouragement during the writing process. Special thanks are also given to the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teaching and Educational Sciences, Universitas Islam As-Syafi'iyah, for providing the academic environment and institutional support essential to the successful completion of this research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Author's Biography			
Name	*Mona AZAHRA*		
Affiliation	*Universitas Islam As-Syafi'iyah*		
Email	*monaazahra6@gmail.com*	Scopus ID	
Google Scholar	*https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=id&user=s_myUy4AAAAJ*	WoS ID	*If any*
Research Interest	*Mona Azahra is a fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in English Education at As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University in Indonesia, exhibiting her passion for language and education through the integration of innovation in learning and teaching methodologies.*		



Author's Biography			
Name	*Tryanti ABDULRAHMAN*		
Affiliation	*Universitas Islam As-Syafi'iyah*		
Email	*tryanti.abdulrahman@gmail.com*	Scopus ID	57200246672
Google Scholar	*https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=id&user=ijXdiQUAAAAJ*	WoS ID	*If any*
Research Interest	*Tryanti received his doctoral degree in reading and literacy in early and middle childhood education and a master's degree in multicultural education at The Ohio State University. Her research interests are reading, EFL teaching that relates culture and technology.*		



Author's Biography			
Name	*Ellis TAMELA*		
Affiliation	*Universitas Islam As-Syafi'iyah*		
Email	*ellis.fkip@uia.ac.id*	Scopus ID	
Google Scholar	*https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=id&user=tErbzW4AAAAJ*	WoS ID	*If any*
Research Interest	*Ellis Tamela holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree in English Education. Her interests include English language teaching, interdisciplinary learning, curriculum development, and digital learning tools. Currently, she is exploring opportunities for further research in English language teaching and educational technology.*		