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Engaging the Silent Learners: Pedagogical Strategies for Supporting Introverted EFL Learners in the Classroom

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Abstract

Despite the critical role of personality in academic success, schools frequently overlook the unique needs of introverted students in EFL classrooms, where tailored instructional strategies can significantly improve their engagement and understanding. This study builds on prior research that primarily examined speaking instructions, highlighting the overlooked instances of introversion in various skill-specific classrooms. It examined the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers in a classroom with introverted EFL learner minority. The primary objective of this study is to identify the challenges faced by the teachers, the various strategies they employed to accommodate the unique learning needs of introverted EFL learners in the context of English language learning, as well as the effectiveness of the strategies from the perspectives of the teachers. Employing a qualitative research design, this study utilized purposive sampling to select the participants and collected the data through interviews with three English teachers at MTsN 1 Mandailing Natal. The findings revealed that during the instructional process, the teachers encountered several challenges in effectively engaging with introverted learners, which include the introvert EFL learners' lack of interest in engaging in the class activities and their limited mastery of vocabulary. The findings also disclosed a set of strategies that can support introverted learners, including modeling, small-group discussions, game-based instruction, autonomous study, and peer teaching. All participants expressed positive perceptions regarding their learners' experiences teaching introverted learners,

suggesting the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing the motivation of introverted learners and achieving educational objectives. The study highlights the imperativeness for educators to thoughtfully consider diverse characteristics of introverted students to foster their motivation within the classroom environment by exerting considerable effort to stimulate engagement from introverted EFL learners within the classroom setting.

Keywords: *Pedagogical strategies, introverted EFL learners, challenges, motivation.*

INTRODUCTION

Introversion refers to a personality trait characterized by a preference for solitude, introspection, and deriving energy from internal thoughts rather than external stimuli (Radić-Bojanić, 2020). While it is often misunderstood as being shy or socially anxious, it simply means that individuals with this trait tend to recharge their mental batteries through quiet reflection and personal activities. Emirza and Sahril (2021) defined introverts as individuals who have difficulty adapting to their environment, being more influenced by their internal world than by external factors. The assertion indicates that introversion is not synonymous with passiveness, unsociability, or shyness; rather, it involves a unique approach to social interaction and cognitive processing. Introverts are more focused on internal thoughts, feelings, and experiences than on external stimuli. Indeed, according to Margolis and Lyubomirsky (2020), this intrinsic focus enables introverts to delve deeply into their mental landscapes, potentially leading to enhanced self-awareness and strategic thinking.

Introverts are often characterized as "withdrawn" individuals due to several defining traits. These include a focus on their own thoughts and feelings, a contemplative demeanor, limited social circles, difficulty initiating conversations, a preference for concentration and solitude, and a tendency to work independently rather than in groups. Fonseca (2021) posited that individuals with introverted personalities typically withdraw from social interactions and prefer solitary reflection over engaging in dialogue with others. While they may possess above-average knowledge or talents, they typically express these abilities in select environments where they feel comfortable. In other words, introverts thrive in solitude or in familiar small groups. Khodabandeh (2022) elaborated that introverts require periods of disengagement to recharge after social interactions. This need for solitude is not indicative of anti-social behavior, depression, or meditation; rather, it reflects a preference for introspection over social engagement.

Introverted students represent a group requiring special attention from educators. Since effective teaching practices necessitate an awareness of students' introverted inclinations, to address the educational challenges posed by introverted students effectively, educators must comprehend the distinct characteristics and needs of this demographic. Educators must not only acknowledge that students' personalities are linked to learning styles and strategies but also understand how personality influences learning outcomes and develop strategies to accommodate introverted students' needs. Consequently, tailoring instructional methods to accommodate the diverse needs of introverted students is crucial for optimizing their academic success. As indicated by Jumareng et al. (2021), introverted students exhibit varying achievements in spoken performances relative to their extroverted counterparts, indicating a need to account for personality in language learning. By respecting these tendencies and avoiding premature judgments, educators can foster a supportive learning environment conducive to participation and improved oral proficiency among quiet students.

Misinterpreting introversion as disinterest can hinder students' confidence and engagement in the learning process. Ultimately, acknowledging and addressing the complexities associated with introverted personalities in educational contexts requires a multifaceted approach that integrates theoretical understanding with practical application. By doing so, educators can create inclusive classrooms that facilitate the optimal development of all students, irrespective of their personality type. In fact, recent studies emphasize the importance of adapting teaching methodologies to cater specifically to the needs of introverted pupils. Incorporating flexible lesson structures and utilizing varied pedagogical approaches can help mitigate potential barriers faced by introverted learners during verbal communication tasks (Dewaele, 2018). Techniques such as discussions, role-playing exercises, storytelling sessions, and interviews can facilitate interactive yet non-overwhelming learning experiences of the introverted learners.

Nevertheless, despite the importance of personality in shaping academic success, schools and colleges often overlook it. Studies have indicated that introverts are often a misrepresented and ignored minority in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Citra & Zainil, 2021; Khodabandeh, 2022; Taghizade et al., 2022). Language teachers often employ the same instructional methods for introverts as for other students, whereas effective teachers, as described by Maghdalena et al. (2022), thoroughly plan their lessons, taking into account individual student needs and behaviors. Employing specific learning strategies tailored to introverted students can enhance their engagement and comprehension.

Thus, investigating the strategies that teachers use to support introverted learners in EFL classrooms is crucial. The distinct challenges in language learning, especially in activities where confidence and social interaction play vital roles, can impede their language development if not properly addressed. By exploring specific instructional techniques where introverted learners can thrive, educators can cultivate a more inclusive and nurturing learning environment, enhancing the educational experience for all students and boosting their engagement and motivation. Identifying and examining these strategies allows teachers to refine their approaches, better catering to the diverse needs of their students and ultimately creating a more effective EFL learning environment.

To serve this purpose, this study was conducted, specifically to explore teachers' strategies for accommodating introverted students' needs in learning English in Indonesian EFL classroom setting. This study extended much of the previous research which mostly focused only on speaking instructions, underrepresenting the many cases of introversions taking place in other skill-specific classrooms. It raised three questions sought to be answered: what challenges are faced by teachers in engaging with introverted EFL learners, what strategies they employed to address introverted students' needs, and how effective the strategies are in facilitating the unique needs of the introverted learners.

1. Teaching Strategy

In educational contexts, strategy can be viewed as a structured plan or series of interventions designed to attain particular academic objectives. According to Ghalebi et al. (2020), strategy encompasses a multifaceted array of cognitive elements including thought patterns, conceptual frameworks, experiential knowledge, objectives, specialized skills, recollections, perceptual biases, and anticipatory outlooks. By integrating these diverse cognitive components, individuals can effectively navigate complex situations and make informed decisions that align with their goals. This comprehensive framework serves as a guiding principle for targeted actions aimed at achieving specific outcomes. Furthermore, a well-defined strategy not only enhances problem-

solving capabilities but also fosters adaptability, enabling individuals to adjust their approaches in response to changing circumstances and new information.

In educational context, teaching strategies represent a systematic plan devised by instructors to facilitate the learning process and attain predetermined educational objectives (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). They encompass the methodologies employed by educators to optimize the delivery of academic materials, which include the structure, instructional objectives, and specific tactics necessary for effective implementation. According to Heilporn et al. (2021), teaching strategies constitutes the observable behaviors of educators in the classroom, which include the execution of teaching strategies, providing timely stimuli for student responses, reinforcing learned material through practice, and enhancing engagement through supplementary activities. They serve as methods to facilitate student learning of course content and extend beyond mere procedural steps in the learning process to comprise the organization of instructional materials and programs designed for students.

Educational teaching strategies possess distinctive characteristics that facilitate their adaptive and flexible application in dynamic learning environments (Lamon, 2020). These strategies are marked by a lack of rigid rules, allowing for internal flexibility and adaptability tailored to the specific conditions of each instructional event. This adaptability highlights the creative and personalized approach of educators in their instructional designs. Additionally, teaching strategies fulfill both structuring and modeling functions, connecting learners to relevant situational contexts while activating their intrinsic psychological mechanisms for learning (Schukajlow et al., 2018). Comprising components such as methods and organizational frameworks, they create cohesive systems that simplify complex teaching processes into manageable operational steps, ensuring logical progression and adherence to specific behavioral guidelines throughout successive instructional sequences. While even well-founded strategies cannot guarantee training success due to various intervening variables (Brevik (2019), effective teaching strategies extend beyond mere systematic methodologies. They should prioritize the holistic training process since successful teaching strategies engage learners in targeted environments, customizing content to meet individual personalities and optimizing educational objectives. By incorporating these adaptive elements, educators can foster inclusive environments where learners flourish through personalized instruction that addresses their unique needs and abilities. Indeed, according to Van der Lans et al. (2018), selecting suitable teaching strategies necessitates meticulous consideration of various factors, including contextual considerations, resource availability, and the distinct needs and attributes of the individual learner characteristics. This selection process aims to maximize the effectiveness of the instructional approach in achieving desired learning outcomes.

2. Personality and Introversion

Richard (2002) characterized personality as an individual's distinctive combination of characteristics, behaviors, and tendencies that encompasses both observable attributes like temperament, emotional expression, and behavior styles, as well as internal dispositions such as values, attitudes, and motivations. It shapes how one interacts with others and approaches various aspects of life. Personality, according to Carson (2019), also influences how one perceives him/herself and the world around him or her, influencing everything from his or her relationships and communication style to his or her coping mechanisms under stress and decision-making processes. The dynamic interplay between different facets of personality, such as extraversion vs. introversion, conscientiousness vs. impulsivity, and openness to change vs. stability, determines

each person's unique identity and contributes to their experiences across multiple domains of life. Understanding one's own personality and those of others helps foster deeper connections, improved interpersonal dynamics, and more effective personal growth strategies (Jayawickreme et al., 2021).

Personality can be broadly categorized into two primary types: introversion and extraversion. An extravert is generally oriented towards external stimuli, while an introvert tends to focus on internal thoughts and self-exploration (Moradi et al., 2019). Although individuals may exhibit traits of both personality types, one usually dominates the other (Liu & Csikszentmihalyi, 2020). According to Bhardwaj et al. (2021), while introverts derive motivation from their inner world, emphasizing imagery, ideas, and self-reflection, preferring solitude for contemplation, extraverts seek social interaction for stimulation. This fundamental difference highlights the importance of tailoring educational settings to cater to both types of personalities effectively. For instance, providing quiet spaces for introspection alongside group activities can ensure that every student has an opportunity to engage meaningfully according to their preferred style.

Beebe (2020) identified several characteristics of introverted individuals. In emotionally charged or conflictual situations, introverts often withdraw and prefer solitude over social engagement. They seek intelligence and meaning from their internal experiences and often exhibit cautious pessimism. Furthermore, introverts strive to maintain positive qualities within themselves; their talents and knowledge may only be revealed in environments where they feel comfortable, making them difficult to understand for others. Oishi and Choi (2020) elaborated that individuals with introverted personalities tend to exhibit a calm demeanor, are careful thinkers, and avoid impulsive decisions. They often value solitude over social interaction, are less sociable, and exhibit passive and cautious behavior. They typically maintain a peaceful demeanor while being reliable and self-controlled. Furthermore, they often find it challenging to articulate their ideas publicly and may feel apprehensive about initiating conversations. Consequently, introverts may struggle to adapt to their surroundings as they are more influenced by their subjective inner world than by external objective realities.

METHOD

In this study, a qualitative research approach was employed. According to Creswell and Cresswell (2017), qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding the experiences of individuals and groups in relation to social issues. The researcher utilized interviews as the primary data collection method. Specifically, semi-structured interviews (Brown & Danaher, 2019), each lasting approximately 20 to 30 minutes, were conducted to gather in-depth insights from teachers who work with introverted students. Three central questions, along with additional supporting questions, were posed to explore the strategies teachers use to facilitate English language learning for introverted students. The researcher employed purposive sampling to select participants for this study, with the selection based on the criterion that teacher participants instruct students who exhibit introverted personality traits. Three English teachers from Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTsN) 1 Mandailing Natal, designated as *teacher one* (JM), *teacher two* (RM), and *teacher three* (MR), were chosen, as they met the specified criterion and were deemed them suitable for the research objectives.

The collected data were subsequently analyzed by employing thematic analysis (Neuendorf, 2018), which involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data, to examine the interview transcripts. The steps as proposed began with becoming familiar

with the data and identifying potential themes, followed by transcribing the interview. After thoroughly reviewing the transcripts, the data was coded and analyzed according to the identified themes, leading to a narrative interpretation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS
1. Findings
1.1 Challenges Faced in Engaging with Introverted Students

Based on the interview data, the researcher identified several challenges experienced by teachers when working with introverted EFL learners in the context of English language learning. RM mentioned a few challenges his students face when learning English:

> First off, they struggle to understand me when I teach in English. Then, their vocabulary is still pretty limited, which leaves them confused. And lastly, even though I've tried different strategies, some students still feel bored and aren't really interested.

MR shared a similar experience, stating, "Sometimes students get bored with English lessons, so I have to try out more strategies in the classroom and put in extra effort to keep them engaged and comfortable with the material."

The teachers' assertion reveal that they encountered considerable challenges in engaging introverted students, recognizing the necessity for additional support to enhance their learning experiences. Introverted students frequently struggle to maintain focus during lessons, as they tend to work independently, complicating teachers' efforts to assess their comprehension of the material. Furthermore, these students often face difficulties in understanding content, leaving educators uncertain about their grasp of the subject matter. A significant concern identified is the apparent limited vocabulary of introverted students; when teachers inquire about vocabulary, they find it challenging to ascertain the students' knowledge due to their silence and visible confusion when attempting to respond. This reticent behavior not only hampers classroom participation but also negatively impacts their motivation to learn, highlighting a need for tailored instructional strategies that foster engagement and understanding among introverted learners.

1.2 Strategies Employed to Address Introverted Learners' Needs

Several strategies were implemented by the participants to accommodate their introverted EFL learners. These strategies include: demonstration, case-based small-group discussions, educational games, independent study, and peer teaching.

1.2.1 Modelling

The results indicated that modeling is believed to be an effective strategy for engaging introverted students within the classroom context. The interview participants emphasized the necessity for their EFL learners to engage in practical experiences to enhance their focus and interest in the learning process. The teacher recognized that one effective method for motivating introverted learners is to encourage active participation through demonstrating the language use to the learners, fostering an environment where they can directly observe and engage in, provided they summon the courage to do so. RM, in this case, briefly mentioned,

I often demonstrate language use to these students, which allows my introverted students to observe the language and its context. For instance, during a recent lesson on ordering food, I acted out the dialogue with a volunteer, providing a clear example of how to engage in conversation. Afterwards, I invited all students, including the silent ones, when they are ready, to try it out themselves.

According to the teacher, modeling strategy facilitate his introverted EFL learners' by offering clear examples and practice scenarios. The teacher, in this case, allowed the learners who prefer to process information internally to formulate their thoughts before speaking. By providing structured opportunities for these students to observe and rehearse language use in a supportive environment, the teacher enables them to feel more comfortable and confident in expressing their ideas.

1.2.2 Small-Group Discussion

Based on the data gathered, the participants suggested that case-based small-group discussions function as another effective strategy for meeting the needs of introverted EFL learners who may feel overwhelmed or anxious in larger, more dynamic classroom settings. The participants emphasized that promoting collaboration among students is crucial for establishing a conducive learning atmosphere, which, in turn, enhances their engagement with the educational material. The participants believed that their introverted students were more inclined to express their thoughts and ideas more comfortably in a more intimate and supportive environment that encourages participation without the pressure of speaking in front of a large audience.

JM asserted on the use of this strategy, "I sometimes use grouping techniques to make the class run more smoothly and encourage teamwork among the students." In line with the JM, MR added, "If my students and I start feeling bored, I switch things up with some small group discussions." The participants' perspectives demonstrate their belief that small-group discussion fosters their learners' active engagement with the lesson. They suggest that small-group discussions facilitate peer interactions that can enhance language acquisition through collaborative learning, where students can practice their speaking and listening skills in a less intimidating context, therefore create a more inclusive classroom atmosphere that supports diverse learning styles and promotes overall language proficiency. This strategy, hence, recognizes and values the unique contributions of introverted learners.

1.2.3 Game-Based Instruction

According to the data collected, the researcher identified that the participants incorporated educational game strategies designed to engage introverted EFL learners within the classroom setting. The interview participants indicated that implementing game-based strategies is essential for fostering an engaging learning environment, thereby encouraging students to become more active and vocal during class discussions. JM, for instance, shared that if the students were not very active, he liked to introduce games to liven things up and keep the class from becoming boring. He states,

I don't let anyone stay quiet in my class; I make sure everyone gets involved and speaks up. Games usually serve this purpose well. I use games like "Word Bingo" and "Pictionary" to make the classroom more fun and relaxed for my shy students. These games help them work together and feel safe to share

their ideas without worrying about messing up in front of others. This really helps build their confidence and gets them more involved in learning!

Using games, the teachers attempted to create a welcoming and non-intimidating environment for shy students, allowing them to collaborate seamlessly while feeling secure enough to express their thoughts. This methodical approach demonstrates the teachers' effort to enhance learners' confidence levels, increasing their overall engagement and enthusiasm towards the learning process.

1.2.4 Game-Based Instruction

The researcher also identified based on the collected data that independent study as one of the strategies utilized to accommodate introverted students within the classroom environment. The interview participants indicated that it is essential to establish a comfortable space for students, enabling them to engage effectively with the learning material. Furthermore, it was noted that students often demonstrate increased participation in classroom activities when they find the lesson content engaging. MR mentioned,

> There are times when students get bored with learning English, so as a teacher, I need to mix things up a bit and put in more effort to make them feel more at ease with the lesson, so they don't lose interest. I usually go with independent study, where I let them pick a topic they like and then find the information on their own.

Emphasizing the assertion, another participant, RM, also observed that introverted students thrive when provided with a personalized approach that promotes active classroom participation. The implementation of independent study, he believes, "strengthens the student-teacher relationship by allowing students to choose their own topics or solve their own problems" and engage in self-guided "knowledge exploration."

In line with the two participants, JM added, "Allowing the students be in charge of their own learning encourages active engagement, even when tasks are completed individually." The participants notions reflect their firm belief that the strategy not only fosters a more comfortable learning environment but also builds trust in EFL learners' ability to support their own development. Crucially, as long as the tasks are designed to align with the students' abilities. As a result, they remain motivated and engaged in the learning process, avoiding the potential for disengagement or boredom. The participants indicate that the introverted students do not require distinct or specialized treatment, but rather, they benefit from an approach that facilitates their personality and learning styles.

1.2.5 Peer Teaching

Another identified strategy employed by the participants to foster the engagement of introvert EFL learners is peer teaching, in which the teacher engages other students to assist and support introverted learners who may encounter challenges during the learning process. The implementation of peer teaching in their classroom can be identified in JM's assertion, "I sometimes ask one of the more active or sharp students to help out their quieter friend." MR also added, "When students seem bored in class, I often use peer teaching, where one student acts like a tutor and helps explain things to others in groups or in pairs."

The two participants agreed that the application of peer teaching strategies can substantially enhance student motivation. Specifically, when an extroverted student is assigned the role of tutor for their introverted peers, the latter may demonstrate increased adaptability and receptiveness during the learning process. This effect can be attributed to the objective of peer teaching, which is to enhance the self-confidence of introverted students within the educational setting. Through peer teaching, as reiterated by MR, the learners come to recognize that they are not isolated in confronting challenges related to comprehension; rather, "many classmates experience similar difficulties and actively collaborate to provide mutual support." Thus, this pedagogical approach is acknowledged as an effective method for improving academic performance for both tutors and learners.

1.3 The Effectiveness of the Strategies

The findings have identified several strategies for addressing the needs of introverted students; however, it is essential to investigate the efficacy of these strategies in facilitating the learning process and achieving the educational objectives. This section of the research elaborates on the outcomes of these strategies and their positive impact on student performance based on the participants' perspectives.

JM voiced his reflection on his use of the strategies in facilitating extrovert EFL learners, stating:

> I use different methods to keep the class engaged without generalizing their personalities. I encourage them to be brave and not feel embarrassed or nervous. I guide them with various strategies until they feel confident and facilitated. I don't do it strictly, but with care, understanding, and patience. I've been using this approach for years. But sometimes they're still shy or anxious. Maybe they don't always get it quickly, but at least some of it sticks in their minds. The important thing is that they understand it.

On the use of the teaching strategies, RM also stated:

> The strategies I use to teach English to deal with the introverts usually work well. There are times when I feel comfortable using them with my students, but other times it can be tough because it really depends on how the students are doing and the situation that day in class.

In addition, MR reiterated:

> Since I started using those strategies to teach English, I've noticed that teaching my students has become a lot easier. Sure, there are still some tough moments, but I just keep trying to figure things out and tackle the challenges because that's part of the job, right? Overall, I'd say these strategies work well for both me and my students.

The results of the interview indicate that the majority of strategies implemented in the classroom have a positive impact on encouraging introverted students to engage actively. These strategies create opportunities and environments that allow introverted students to explore their identities freely. Furthermore, such approaches stimulate these students to enhance their creativity, develop critical thinking skills, and build confidence in addressing challenges, whether they arise internally or externally. They are more willing to tackle new lessons and confront negative thought

patterns. Moreover, the effectiveness of the learning process is significantly influenced by the teacher's commitment to engaging all students within the classroom. The success of these strategies is contingent upon the teacher's diligent efforts to involve introverted students, who often face numerous challenges. The responses provided by the participants also indicate that student engagement in the classroom is influenced by the diverse strategies employed by teachers to promote active participation. The researcher posits that implementing creative methodologies may serve as a more effective model for enhancing students' understanding and discussion of the subject matter. By employing a variety of instructional strategies, introverted students can discover personalized learning methods that effectively nurture their potential and talents. Ultimately, all participants acknowledged that these strategies are effective and facilitate the teaching of English. Although challenges may arise, they can be adequately addressed.

2. Discussion

The findings reveal significant insights regarding participants' challenges in teaching English, emphasizing the necessity of identifying these difficulties prior to exploring potential strategies for resolution. Participants indicated a need for deeper comprehension of their students' needs during the educational process, as not all learners grasp concepts at the same pace. Some students, for instance, require additional explanations to facilitate understanding. The finding aligns well with that of Vieluf and Göbel (2019), who affirmed that understanding students' individual needs is essential for creating an effective and inclusive educational environment. Tailoring instruction to address EFL learners' diverse learning styles, abilities, and interests fosters student engagement and promotes better academic outcomes. Moreover, identifying and addressing these unique needs allows educators to provide targeted support, helping the learners overcome challenges and reach their full potential.

Another significant challenge identified was students' limited vocabulary, which contributes to confusion in learning English. Additionally, several participants noted that despite employing various strategies, some students still experience boredom and lack interest in learning English. Despite the fact that two participants reported no difficulties in teaching these students, in general the results indicate a range of teaching challenges faced when instructing introverted students in English language acquisition. The results also highlight the nuanced nature of teaching introverted learners, particularly in the realm of English language acquisition, where, as stated by Badem-Korkmaz and Balaman (2022), social interaction and verbal participation are often critical. The presence of challenges for most participants points to the need for more adaptive teaching strategies that accommodate different personality types. It underscores the importance of understanding introversion not as a barrier, but as a variable that requires tailored pedagogical approaches to support effective learning.

The researcher, furthermore, expressed their perspectives on the teaching strategies they employed for introverted EFL learners. The analysis of the strategies suggests that introverted students might face challenges and benefit from a personalized approach to overcome them. The finding is consistent with Fadaee et al.'s (2021) assertion that a personalized approach in teaching introvert EFL learners is crucial for fostering an environment where these students feel comfortable and supported in their language acquisition journey. This approach not only respects their learning preferences but also ensures that their unique strengths, leading to more meaningful language development. All participants highlighted the significance of teachers' understanding their students' unique characteristics, implying that teachers who acknowledge and understand

their students' traits can improve the teaching and learning experience (Angelovska et al., 2021). The social behaviors of introverted and shy individuals differ significantly from those of extroverted individuals in ways relevant to educators and advisors. Recognizing these differences is crucial for teachers in implementing strategies that effectively support the teaching and learning process. Based on interviews, the researcher found that participants used various strategies in the classroom. Teachers' choice of these strategies depended on the particular needs and characteristics of their students.

One participant implemented modelling strategy to capture his EFL learners' attention. Modelling, according to Machili et al. (2020), refers to the execution of an activity in a manner that allows students to observe its process, thereby facilitating their ability to translate theoretical concepts into practical applications. This strategy, which entails the instructor illustrating procedures for the students. It has proven to contribute to enhancing EFL learners' courage and confidence within the teaching and learning process (Coyle & de Larios, 2020; Luquin & Mayo, 2021). Moreover, the small-group discussion strategy, employed by JM and MR, have been widely used particularly to enhance EFL learners' proficiency in English while fostering mutual support among peers (Darani et al., 2023; Villarreal & Munarriz-Ibarrola, 2021; Zulfikar, 2023). In this context, small group discussions encourage students to engage in the exploration of concepts, deepen their understanding of new information, develop problem-solving techniques, and promote effective thinking and communication skills. Furthermore, this approach enhances group cooperation and increases student involvement in decision-making processes (Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2019). Besides, small group discussions also promote cooperative learning, which has been shown to positively impact the teaching process for introverted learners (Namaziandost et al., 2020). In addition to promoting idea exchange among peers, cooperative learning also cultivates respect for both high-achieving and struggling students, who usually comprise introvert learners. This strategy, therefore, is particularly effective for addressing challenges encountered while teaching English to introverted learners.

In addition, JM and MR implemented a peer teaching strategy aimed at fostering student autonomy in selecting partners for collaborative problem-solving within the educational framework. According to Ruegg (2018), the learning process is not exclusively teacher-driven; rather, students can engage in mutual instruction, thereby facilitating meaningful learning outcomes. Furthermore, this pedagogical approach has proven particularly beneficial for English language acquisition, especially among introverted learners (Joh, 2019; Khodabandeh, 2022). Furthermore, MR implemented the strategy of independent study to facilitate English language acquisition among students. Aprianto and Purwati (2020) elucidated that autonomous study constitutes an individualized learning experience wherein students are afforded the autonomy to select a specific topic, gather and analyze relevant information, apply requisite skills, and demonstrate their learning outcomes, thus enhancing motivation and engagement. Autonomous learning in the EFL classroom fosters students' ability to take control of their own language development, encouraging self-directed and independent study. By promoting responsibility for their learning process, autonomous learning aligns with modern pedagogical approaches that value learner-centeredness and individualized instruction (Hsieh & Hsieh, 2019). Ultimately, fostering autonomy helps learners become more confident and competent in their language acquisition journey. The final strategy identified among the batteries of teachers' strategy is game-based strategies in educational contexts, as evidenced by insights from JM during an interview. This approach is utilized within the teaching and learning process to enhance student engagement and

enjoyment during lessons. Almusharraf (2023) defines game strategies as activities that simulate real-world scenarios, where participants pursue objectives within established rules. EFL teachers and educators alike may find it beneficial to incorporate such strategies to foster enthusiasm and enjoyment among students throughout the educational experience.

Ultimately, our findings indicate that a diverse array of strategies employed by educators to engage introverted EFL learners has yielded a favorable impact on enhancing the learners' academic achievements across cognitive and affective domains as indicated in the reported benefits following the implementation of these strategies. All participants concurred that employing instructional methods significantly facilitated their learning process despite the fact that one participant occasionally encountered difficulties despite utilizing these strategies. Consequently, incorporating methodologies tailored for introverted students has proven advantageous for educators seeking to support English language instruction effectively. When introverted students feel understood and appreciated by their peers, they are more inclined to articulate their thoughts freely and exhibit a readiness to engage with lessons as directed by the instructor. Nevertheless, it is advisable for educators to first identify the specific challenges inherent in each student's learning process before implementing any strategy, given that introverted students may exhibit diverse difficulties during their academic endeavors. Tailoring strategies to address these individual challenges can enhance their educational experience. By utilizing differentiated approaches to support the teaching and learning process, educators can more effectively engage and instruct their students.

As a final note, in the teaching and learning process, the teacher assumes a dual role, not only as the primary source of knowledge but also as a facilitator within the classroom. To foster engagement, particularly among introverted students, the teacher must employ creative strategies to encourage active participation.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the challenges faced by EFL teachers in accommodating introvert EFL learners at MTsN 1 Mandailing Natal, the pedagogical strategies they employed to facilitate these learners as well as their effectiveness. The qualitative data from the interview revealed that the challenges posed by introvert EFL learners mainly centered around their apparent lack of interest in participating in the lesson and their limited ability, especially in the area of vocabulary, which resulted in their hesitation to express their responses to the teachers' prompt in English. However, the relationship between the learners' lack of interest and their limited competence—whether the former contributes the latter or the other way around—needs further exploration. Among the strategies employed by the teachers to accommodate their introvert EFL learners include modelling, small-group discussion, game-based instruction, autonomous study, and peer teaching. Furthermore, as stated by the participants, the strategies have been relatively able to facilitate and encourage the introvert learners to be more engaged in learning, creating a comfortable learning environment where they are free to articulate their thoughts without the fear of apprehension. These findings underscore the important role of teachers as facilitator in language classroom, who not only provide knowledge but also utilize a variety of techniques that can motivate the learners to participate, regardless of their learning preferences.

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