

## **KNOWING ENGLISH OR DOING ENGLISH? QUESTIONING ENGLISH TEACHERS' BELIEF IN THEORETICAL BASED TEACHING**

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### **Abstract**

This research, investigates the rationale behind the persistent adoption of theory-based pedagogical strategies by numerous English educators in Indonesia and examines the implications of these beliefs on students' speaking proficiency. Employing a mixed-methods framework, the study engaged 50 educators from junior and senior high schools through the administration of surveys and comprehensive interviews. Quantitative analysis indicates that while a majority of educators acknowledge the significance of grammar and vocabulary, a notable proportion (86.7%) concurs that the integration of theoretical constructs with practical application can enhance students' proficiency in English, particularly in speaking. Nevertheless, systemic impediments, including curriculum mandates, insufficient training opportunities, inadequate resources, and large class sizes, hinder the effective implementation of communicative instructional methodologies. Qualitative findings further reveal that educators frequently resort to theoretical instruction due to institutional pressures and student-related obstacles, such as anxiety associated with speaking or the fear of making errors. Although they acknowledge the importance of practical instructional strategies, many educators exhibit a lack of confidence or access to the necessary resources to execute them effectively. The study concludes that it is imperative to bridge the divide between theoretical understanding and authentic communication practices to advance English language education in Indonesia. It advocates for targeted professional development initiatives and structural support mechanisms to empower educators in adopting more interactive and student-centered pedagogical practices.

**Keywords:** English teaching beliefs, theoretical-based instruction, speaking proficiency, communicative approach, Indonesian EFL teachers, mixed-method research.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Indonesia, many teachers still teach English with a theory-based approach, such as using books and discussing questions, rather than direct practice (Muharoni et al., 2022). Theory-based learning tends to emphasise material mastery without providing practical context relevant to real life which can hinder their deep understanding and English language skills. In addition, previous studies have shown that teaching approaches that do not consider the relevance of the material to real life can reduce their motivation to learn (Al-Sharief, 2024) The lack of practice in English leads to difficulties for students in using the language in both daily and academic life. However, English learning should emphasize interactive practical teaching that involves student engagement, which can help develop their English skills (A. Prayogo, 2022). This raises an important question: Why do English teachers in Indonesia focus more on knowing English (theory-based knowledge) rather than doing English

(practical language use)? This issue highlights the importance of a practical approach in English language learning.

Speaking English is a crucial skill that Indonesian students must possess to boost their confidence when expressing ideas, both in the classroom and in daily situations (Miranda & Wahyudin, n.d.) . With good speaking skills, students can more easily participate in discussions, presentations, or group tasks, thus supporting their academic achievements. Additionally, many learning resources, such as videos, articles, and tutorials, are available in English. This ability also trains students to think critically and logically, as they must be able to structure arguments or opinions effectively (Muhammadiyah et al., 2020). Moreover, speaking English from an early age can open up opportunities, such as participating in competitions, student exchanges, or international education programs (scholarships) (Waluyo et al., 2021) which often require discussions and interviews. Students who cannot speak English will face difficulties in these situations.

However, many students in Indonesia still experience various challenges in speaking English, which becomes a major barrier. One of the problems is the lack of opportunities for direct speaking practice, both in and outside the classroom. Many schools still emphasize theory-based learning, such as grammar and vocabulary, without providing enough space for active speaking activities (Meisani, 2023). Additionally, psychological factors such as shyness and lack of self-confidence often prevent students from attempting to speak, especially due to fear of making mistakes in pronunciation or grammar (Fachrunnisa & Nuraeni, 2022) or being mocked by classmates, which becomes a significant social obstacle.

There are several external challenges faced by students in Indonesia that cause difficulties in speaking English. These include limited exposure to English in daily life, making it hard for students to master correct pronunciation and intonation. Other challenges include (1) lack of vocabulary knowledge, (2) grammar as an obstacle, (3) fear of negative reactions from others, (4) low courage when speaking in public in English, (5) anxiety when speaking English (Farhani et al., n.d.). Factors such as ineffective teaching methods, lack of access to real-world English usage contexts, and language anxiety further worsen the situation (Nisa Aldira Lubis et al., 2024). These challenges prevent students from using English confidently and effectively in real-life situations.

One factor hindering English teachers in Indonesia from implementing practical English language learning is that teachers and students often have misaligned expectations in the teaching and learning process, which can affect outcomes and learning attitudes (Ha & Nguyen, 2021). Many English teachers teach without adequate training (Karademir & Gorgoz, 2019) making it difficult to apply effective teaching methods. The complexity of curriculum policies, limited facilities, short teaching hours, and low salaries contribute to some teachers being less motivated to teach English (Boy Jon et al., 2021). The differences in students' backgrounds and characteristics also affect their ability to master English (S. S. N. A. Agung, 2019). Most students have a low

vocabulary mastery, which is a major obstacle in understanding English. As a result, English learning in Indonesia often remains focused on theory rather than effective and interactive speaking skills, which are rarely developed.

Teachers' beliefs in theory-based teaching are often based on the assumption that mastery of grammar and vocabulary is the main foundation of English learning (Anne C. Sedanza et al., 2023). Teachers tend to believe that by understanding the structure and rules of the language, students will automatically be able to use it in speaking (Tarigan & Stevani, 2022). However, this approach overlooks the fact that speaking skills require direct, interactive, and effective practice, not just theoretical knowledge. Some teachers may feel that theory-based learning is easier to implement and more measurable because the results can be immediately seen through written exams (AlSalem, n.d.2020). However, this belief creates an ineffective classroom environment. Students are rarely invited to actively participate in conversations or practical activities, both inside and outside the classroom, making it difficult for them to use English in real-life situations, even if they have sufficient grammar and vocabulary knowledge.

Previous studies on practice-based English learning show its effectiveness in improving language skills, especially speaking and listening, compared to theory-based approaches. Analysis shows that interactive methods, such as role play, group discussions, and technology-assisted learning (e.g., mobile apps and online platforms), create meaningful engagement and boost students' confidence in speaking English, especially when supported by consistent feedback and real-world applications (Alsawat, 2020). A student-centered approach that involves direct practice and real-world contexts is more effective in improving language skills compared to an approach that is solely based on theory (Ly, 2024). Teachers' beliefs about practice-based teaching can influence teaching effectiveness and student achievement (Martinez et al., 2024). Previous studies on theory-based English learning highlight its limitations in actively developing language skills. Research shows that methods focused too much on grammar rules and vocabulary mastery often only result in passive knowledge with minimal improvement in students' ability to use the language in real contexts (Universidad Andres Bello et al., 2023). Traditional approaches that are effective for reading and writing skills are insufficient to promote communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (Gao & Cui, 2024). Additionally, studies show that excessive reliance on theory-based learning can lead to low student engagement and confidence due to the limited opportunity to use the language interactively and meaningfully (Murdani et al., 2020). To address these shortcomings, combining theoretical knowledge with practical application is essential to bridge the gap between understanding and real-world language use.

The novelty of this study lies in its explicit examination of the gap between English teachers' theoretical beliefs and their actual classroom practices, an area that has received limited empirical attention in previous research. While earlier studies have predominantly focused either on the effectiveness of theory-based

or practice-based instruction, few have systematically investigated how teachers' beliefs about theoretical instruction directly shape their pedagogical decisions in real classroom contexts, particularly at the junior and senior high school levels in Indonesia. By employing a mixed-methods design, this study offers new insights into how theoretical orientations are translated—or fail to be translated—into instructional practices. Qualitative interviews reveal teachers' rationales, constraints, and dilemmas in integrating theory with practice, while quantitative survey data demonstrate the extent to which theoretical beliefs influence teaching methods. This integrated approach contributes original evidence to the literature by clarifying the belief–practice relationship and by providing empirically grounded implications for teacher training programs aimed at fostering more balanced, interactive, and communicative English language instruction.

The goal of this research is to show that many teachers in Indonesia still apply theory-based teaching methods that cause students to struggle in speaking English fluently, correctly, and confidently. Students often only memorize and understand the theory without being able to apply it practically in daily communication. This is due to the focus of learning being more on memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules, rather than applying the language in real contexts. This research aims to identify the perspectives of teachers using traditional teaching methods that, while effective for understanding language structure, do not sufficiently support the development of speaking and listening skills. The study will also analyze the impact of theory-based approaches on students' confidence and engagement, as well as the importance of applying more interactive and communication-based methods to improve English proficiency in real-world situations. This research also aims to show that without the integration of theoretical knowledge and speaking practice, students will continue to face difficulties in using English confidently and correctly in daily conversations, despite their theoretical understanding of the language. The lack of practice not only harms students' speaking ability but also reduces their motivation to actively engage with the language.

Therefore this research question for this study :

1. Why are English teachers in Indonesia more likely to apply theory-based rather than hands-on learning methods in teaching English?
2. To what extent do English teachers believe in the effectiveness of theoretical-grounded tutoring in perfecting students' English proficiency?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, in which quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to further explain and elaborate the quantitative results. The quantitative phase used a survey to identify general patterns in English teachers' beliefs toward theoretical-based teaching and their instructional practices. Based on the survey findings, the qualitative phase adopted a case study approach through in-depth interviews to explore teachers' underlying

experiences, motivations, and challenges that explain their continued reliance on theoretical teaching methods. Integration of the data occurred at the interpretation stage, where qualitative findings were used to clarify, enrich, and contextualize the quantitative results, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices.

### **Subject**

The participants in this research were English educators from junior and senior high schools located in East Java, Indonesia. A total of 30 participants were chosen using purposive sampling, consisting of 15 junior high school instructors and 15 senior high school instructors. This sample was deemed adequate to reflect diverse teaching situations within secondary education.

In the qualitative phase, three teachers were intentionally chosen—two from junior high schools and one from a senior high school—due to their teaching experience and readiness to participate in detailed interviews. These participants were selected to offer differing viewpoints concerning the execution of theoretical and practical methods.

### **Instruments**

This research utilized two primary tools for gathering data: a formal questionnaire and a semi-structured interview framework. The questionnaire was utilized in the quantitative phase to collect information regarding teachers' beliefs about theory-driven instruction and its real-world applications. It comprised 15 closed-ended questions organized on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The items assessed four key dimensions :

1. Teachers' perceptions of theoretical-based instruction,
2. Perceived challenges in implementing practice-based methods,
3. Institutional and systemic constraints, and
4. Teachers' confidence and need for professional development.

The interview guide was utilized in the qualitative phase to delve deeper into the personal experiences, motivations, and obstacles teachers encounter in applying both theoretical and practical methods in the classroom. The interview featured open-ended questions, enabling participants to consider their teaching decisions, the justifications for those decisions, and their recommendations for enhancing English language teaching. Interview questions were divided into four themes:

- 1) factors affecting the use of theoretical instruction,
- 2) perceptions of communicative methods,
- 3) barriers to practice-based teaching, and
- 4) possible solutions or support needed.

Instrument validity was established through expert judgment. Two experts in English language education reviewed the questionnaire and interview guide to assess content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The validity of the questionnaire was examined using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. Each item score was correlated with the total score to determine whether the item measured the intended construct.

With a total sample of  $N = 30$ , the  $r$ -table value at  $\alpha = 0.05$  is 0.361. An item is considered valid if:

$r\text{-count} > r\text{-table} (0.361)$

**X. Item Validity Test Results**

Item	r-count	r-count	Result
Q1	0.68	0.361	Valid
Q2	0.71	0.361	Valid
Q3	0.65	0.361	Valid
Q4	0.59	0.361	Valid
Q5	0.73	0.361	Valid
Q6	0.62	0.361	Valid
Q7	0.70	0.361	Valid
Q8	0.66	0.361	Valid
Q9	0.69	0.361	Valid
Q10	0.72	0.361	Valid
Q11	0.64	0.361	Valid
Q12	0.67	0.361	Valid
Q13	0.74	0.361	Valid
Q14	0.61	0.361	Valid
Q15	0.70	0.361	Valid

All questionnaire items show r-count values higher than r-table (0.361). Therefore, all items are valid and appropriate for measuring teachers’ beliefs toward theoretical-based teaching.

**Instrument Reliability**

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha to measure internal consistency

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Interpretation
Teachers’ Beliefs Questionnaire	15	0.89	Highly Reliable

The Cronbach’s Alpha value of **0.89** indicates that the instrument has **high reliability**, as it exceeds the minimum standard of 0.70. This means that the questionnaire produces consistent and stable results across respondents.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis in this study was conducted manually utilizing the responses gathered from a structured questionnaire filled out by 30 English teachers. The questionnaire featured Likert-scale statements categorized into four main areas: (1) Perspectives on theory-based instruction, (2) Challenges in implementing practice-focused approaches, (3) Opinions on hands-on (doing) methods, and (4) Constraints associated with institutions and educators.

Each item in the survey was evaluated with a 5-point scale but later categorized into three categories for easier analysis: Positive (Strongly Agree and Agree), Neutral, and Negative (Disagree and Strongly Disagree).

The percentage of responses in each category was calculated by taking the number of replies for each item, dividing it by the total number of participants, and then multiplying the result by 100. For example, 53.3% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that theoretical teaching is relevant in the Indonesian setting, while 26.7% disagreed. These percentages were organized into tables to display trends and patterns in the beliefs of teachers.

This procedure did not utilize any software. All calculations were done manually with a calculator, and Microsoft Excel was used to organize the data. All answers were gathered since the questionnaire was designed on Google Forms, guaranteeing that every item needed a reply. As a result, all 30 data sets were completed and included in the analysis. To improve the quantitative findings, the study also conducted qualitative analysis based on interviews with three English teachers.

The interview data were manually transcribed and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The process involved carefully examining each transcript, identifying recurrent keywords and concepts, categorizing them into codes, and grouping them into major themes. The researcher executed thematic coding by hand, ensuring that the themes reflected the true expressions of the participants. Four key themes emerged: (1) External factors limiting practice-based teaching (e.g., curriculum mandates and exam focus), In a qualitative study, must specify the model that employed for data analysis. This short description is then succeeded by the implementation of each phase within the chosen model.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Quantitative Data Findings**

Based on the data derived from the administered questionnaire, the subsequent findings are presented as follows:

***RQ1: Why are English teachers in Indonesia more likely to apply theory-based rather than hands-on learning methods?***

***Table 1. Factors Influencing the Use of Theory-Based Teaching***

<b><i>Factor</i></b>	<b><i>Agree (%)</i></b>	<b><i>Neutral (%)</i></b>	<b><i>Disagree (%)</i></b>
<i>Theoretical teaching is still relevant in the Indonesian context</i>	<b>53.3%</b>	<b>20 %</b>	<b>26.7%</b>
<i>Limited class time to apply practice-based teaching</i>	<b>60 %</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<i>Lack of resources for speaking activities</i>	<b>36.7 %</b>	<b>33.3 %</b>	<b>30%</b>
<i>Difficulty managing interactive learning in large classes</i>	<b>40%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>23.3%</b>
<i>National exams focus</i>			

<i>more on theory than communication</i>	<b>63.4%</b>	<b>20%</b>	16.6%
<i>Curriculum restricts practical teaching implementation</i>	40%	<b>36.7%</b>	23.3 %
<i>School facilities are not adequate for interactive methods</i>	38.7 %	40 %	<b>23.6%</b>
Large class sizes hinder speaking-focused teaching	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	20%

**RQ2: To what extent do English teachers believe in the effectiveness of theoretical-grounded teaching in improving students' English proficiency?**

**Table 2. Teachers' Beliefs on the Effectiveness of Theoretical-Based Teaching**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Neutral (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>
Theoretical teaching helps students understand grammar and vocabulary	<b>43.3%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>20%</b>
Students will speak fluently after mastering grammar and vocabulary	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>30%</b>
Theoretical teaching is more effective than practice-based teaching	<b>20%</b>	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>53.3%</b>

**Table 3. Teachers' Beliefs on Practice-Based and Integrated Approaches**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Neutral (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>
Practice-based methods improve students' speaking skills	70%	23.3%	6.7%
Students gain confidence through speaking practice	76.7%	20%	3.3%
Teaching in real-life contexts is more effective than textbook use	73.3%	23.3%	3.3%
Integration of theory and practice improves English proficiency	86.7%	10%	3.3%
Both grammar (knowing) and speaking (doing) are essential	90%	6.7%	3.3%
Teachers need more			

training to combine theory and practice	66.7%	23.3%	10%
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This study analyzes survey data from 30 English teachers to explore their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of theory-based teaching methods and the reasons behind their continued use in classroom practice. The findings reveal diverse perspectives and highlight a significant gap between theoretical understanding and its actual implementation. A total of 53.3% of respondents agreed that theory-based teaching remains relevant in the Indonesian context, while 20% were neutral and 13.3% disagreed, indicating that such approaches are still widely accepted, though not without reservations. However, this acceptance appears to be influenced more by contextual demands than by strong confidence in its pedagogical effectiveness.

Further analysis shows that teachers recognize the role of theoretical knowledge in supporting basic language understanding. About 43.3% agreed that theory helps students grasp grammar and vocabulary; however, 36.7% expressed uncertainty regarding its effectiveness in facilitating real communication. This suggests that theoretical instruction is often perceived as foundational but insufficient for developing communicative competence. In fact, 43.3% of teachers reported that theory-based approaches do not significantly improve students' practical skills, such as speaking and writing, with an additional 20% strongly supporting this view. Moreover, 63.4% of respondents indicated that English teaching practices in Indonesia tend to overemphasize theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical application. This imbalance raises concerns that students may acquire passive knowledge without the ability to use English effectively in real-life situations, which may negatively affect their confidence and participation.

At the same time, the findings reveal that teachers' reliance on theory-based teaching is strongly shaped by systemic and institutional constraints. A majority of respondents identified

external factors such as exam-oriented curricula (63.4%), limited instructional time (60%), inadequate facilities (36.7%), and large class sizes (23.3%) as key barriers to implementing communicative and practice-based approaches. These structural limitations restrict teachers' flexibility and push them toward more manageable, theory-driven methods. In this sense, theory-based teaching is often adopted not as an ideal strategy, but as a practical response to contextual challenges within the education system.

Differences in perspectives were also observed across teaching experience. Younger teachers tended to express greater skepticism toward theory-based approaches, with 26.7% considering them outdated, while only 13.3% of more experienced teachers shared this view. This generational gap may be influenced by differences in educational background and exposure to contemporary teaching methodologies that emphasize communication and interaction.

Overall, the findings suggest that although teachers acknowledge the importance of theoretical knowledge as a foundation for language learning, they question its effectiveness when applied in isolation. There is a clear preference for more balanced approaches that integrate theory with practice, as reflected in the strong agreement among respondents on the importance of communicative activities for improving students' speaking skills and confidence. These results highlight the urgent need for educational reforms, including curriculum adjustments, improved teacher training, and better resource provision, to support the implementation of more interactive and student-centered English language teaching.

## **QUALITATIVE**

Additionally, by conducting a thorough analysis of semi-structured interviews with three English language teachers, the findings reveal four key themes that subtly affect the current application of theory-based teaching there are : 1) factors impacting the implementation of Theory – Based Pedagogical Approaches 2) Educators Perspectives on Instructional Methods 3) Factors Affecting the Execution of Practice-Oriented Pedagogy 4) Strategies for Enhancing Educational Quality

### **1. Factors Impacting the Implementation of Theory-Based Pedagogical Approaches**

Elements Influencing the Application of Theory-Driven Teaching Methods. The results from the interviews reveal that the major dependence on textbooks, worksheets, and organized activities arises from systemic constraints like a lack of time, government policies, and national assessment standards. For instance, Helen, a participant in the interviews, explained: "I mainly use theory-driven approaches as they allow for oversight and align with the educational standards." This reply indicates that outside influences—such as strict curriculum structures and administrative mandates—force teachers to favor theory-based approaches. These results support Wallace's (1991) claim that institutional environments often influence teaching choices, especially in educational systems where academic evaluations take precedence over communication skills.

### **2. Educators' Perspectives on Instructional Methods**

Educators' Views on Teaching Approaches All involved educators acknowledged the importance of communicative and practice-oriented learning; nonetheless, they described its real-world application as difficult. Meytha stated: "Students require speaking practice, yet many feel shy or fear making errors, making it difficult to encourage them to participate in roleplays." This observation highlights how the belief systems of teachers and the behavioral patterns of students affect methodological decisions. Despite theoretical support for

communicative approaches, their implementation is hindered by classroom dynamics and teacher concerns. These results strengthen the assertion put forth by (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) that, although communicative language teaching is widely supported, teachers often go back to traditional techniques when facing practical challenges in the classroom.

### **3. Factors Affecting the Execution of Practice-Oriented Pedagogy**

**Elements Influencing the Implementation of Practice-Centered Teaching** The execution of experiential or task-driven education is significantly by structural barriers large class sizes and scarce teaching materials. Miss Sofi expressed: "My class has more than 30 students, making it difficult to give everyone a chance to participate in speaking practice during one session." This observation demonstrates how logistical issues prevent the full realization of interactive learning. The results align with Littlewood's (2004) assertions that challenges like overcrowded classrooms and inadequate resources often impede communicative teaching methods in real-world settings.

### **4. Strategies for Enhancing Educational Quality**

**Methods to Improve Educational Quality** Despite these challenges, the teachers surveyed showed a readiness to implement more student-focused approaches if given suitable support systems. All three educators emphasized the importance of training workshops, classroom observations, and engagement with various instructional models. Helena considered: "With more examples and sufficient training time, I would be enthusiastic about applying more practice-focused teaching techniques." This viewpoint corresponds with Guskey's (2002) opinion that changes in teaching practices are usually facilitated by chances for professional growth instead of just theoretical learning. Likewise, Dörnyei (2001) highlighted the importance of teacher motivation and self-efficacy as essential elements in implementing innovative teaching strategies.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study demonstrates that English teachers in Indonesia continue to rely heavily on theory-based instruction, largely due to institutional policies, curriculum demands, and assessment-oriented educational systems. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that grammar-focused teaching remains dominant in many EFL contexts because national curricula and standardized examinations prioritize linguistic accuracy over communicative competence (Wang et al., 2021; Ismail et al., 2023). However, this study extends earlier research by showing that teachers' reliance on theoretical instruction is not solely a matter of personal preference, but rather a response to systemic pressures that limit pedagogical flexibility.

The findings also support Kim's (2020) argument that structural constraints—such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, and exam-driven objectives—significantly hinder the implementation of communicative teaching methods in Asian EFL classrooms. Similar to Rachmajanti et al. (2022), this study found that overcrowded classrooms reduce students' opportunities to practice speaking, which weakens their communicative competence. Unlike earlier studies that focused primarily on student outcomes, this research highlights teachers' lived experiences and explains how these constraints directly shape their instructional decisions.

In line with Dewaele and Li (2020), the results indicate that theoretical knowledge remains an essential foundation for language learning, but it is insufficient when applied in isolation. Teachers in this study acknowledged that grammar and vocabulary instruction help students

understand language structure. However, they also recognized that excessive reliance on theory leads to passive learning and limited speaking confidence. This finding reinforces Martinez et al. (2024) and Gao and Cui (2024), who argue that students may master linguistic rules without developing the ability to communicate effectively in real-world contexts.

Psychological factors, including fear of making mistakes and anxiety about peer evaluation, were also found to restrict students' participation in speaking activities. This result aligns with Farhani et al. (2023) and Tsui (2021), who emphasize that affective barriers can significantly reduce learners' willingness to communicate. This study adds to the literature by showing that such psychological challenges not only affect students but also influence teachers' methodological choices, leading them to favor safer, theory-based instruction.

Importantly, this research supports previous calls for integrating theoretical instruction with communicative practice rather than replacing one with the other. Similar to Rahmawati et al. (2023) and Ly (2024), the findings suggest that balanced approaches such as Project-Based Learning and Content and Language Integrated Learning can enhance student engagement and speaking proficiency. However, this study contributes new insight by demonstrating that successful integration depends heavily on institutional support and continuous professional development for teachers.

The discussion confirms that the gap between "knowing English" and "doing English" persists due to entrenched beliefs and systemic limitations. While theoretical instruction remains valuable, this study highlights the urgent need for pedagogical models that combine linguistic knowledge with authentic communication. Without curriculum flexibility, adequate resources, and targeted teacher training, efforts to promote communicative English teaching are unlikely to succeed.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study highlights the importance of moving beyond a strictly theory-based orientation in English language teaching toward a more balanced integration of theoretical knowledge and communicative practice. Rather than positioning theory and practice as opposing approaches, the findings underscore the need for pedagogical models that deliberately connect grammatical understanding with meaningful language use. This has important implications for English language education in Indonesia, particularly in secondary school contexts where exam-oriented instruction continues to dominate classroom practice.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study suggests that English teachers require sustained professional development that focuses on practical strategies for integrating theory with communicative activities, such as task-based learning and project-based instruction. At the institutional level, curriculum designers and policymakers are encouraged to provide greater flexibility in instructional planning and assessment systems so that speaking and listening skills are valued alongside grammatical accuracy. Without such structural support, teachers may continue to rely on theory-based methods despite recognizing their limitations.

This study also contributes to the broader field of EFL research by demonstrating that teachers' instructional practices are shaped not only by individual beliefs but also by systemic and contextual constraints. Understanding this interaction is essential for designing teacher education programs that are responsive to real classroom conditions rather than idealized pedagogical models.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the number of qualitative participants was limited, which may restrict the depth and diversity of perspectives captured. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by social desirability or personal interpretation. Finally, the research focused on junior and senior high school teachers in one regional context, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings.

### **SUGGESTION**

These recommendations are directly derived from the study's findings, which reveal that English teachers' continued reliance on theoretical-based instruction is shaped by systemic constraints, limited professional development, and challenges in implementing communicative practices; therefore, coordinated efforts at the curricular, institutional, and teacher-training levels are essential to support the effective integration of theoretical knowledge and practical language use in English classrooms.

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