



# Managing English Language Instruction: Private Teachers' Strategies for Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

Private English Teacher, Speaking Skills Development, Communicative Teaching Strategies.

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This study examines the strategies employed by private English tutors in Indonesia to enhance students' speaking skills, particularly in non-formal educational settings. English speaking proficiency is crucial for academic and professional success, yet many students face barriers such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited practice opportunities. The study aims to explore the methods used by private tutors to address these challenges and improve speaking competence. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five experienced private tutors in Palangka Raya. The findings reveal that tutors utilize communicative strategies such as role-playing, storytelling, task-based learning, and digital tools to foster student engagement and fluency. Additionally, tutors adapt their approaches to meet individual student needs, addressing psychological factors like anxiety and motivation. The study contributes to the understanding of private tutoring practices, emphasizing the importance of creativity and flexibility in non-formal English language instruction. The findings suggest the need for further recognition of private tutoring as an essential component of language education in Indonesia.

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## INTRODUCTION

English speaking skills are essential in today's globalized world, enabling individuals to communicate effectively across diverse settings, from education to professional environments (Panggua et al., 2020; Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022; Soto et al., 2020). This skill is a key component of communicative competence and has been increasingly emphasized as an essential part of education worldwide. In Indonesia, despite the widespread acknowledgment of its importance, many students still face challenges in developing proficient speaking skills, particularly in non-native contexts. Research has highlighted that even in regions where

English is widely taught, students often struggle with speaking due to various obstacles (Bachman et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021). These challenges are particularly noticeable in private tutoring contexts, where individualized instruction lacks standardized methods. Thus, exploring the strategies private English teachers use to enhance students' speaking skills becomes essential for improving language learning outcomes.

In Indonesia, the ability to speak English fluently has become a critical competence for academic success and career advancement. However, many students, especially those in non-formal educational settings such as private tutoring, still encounter significant barriers to effective communication. Factors like low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and limited vocabulary frequently impede students from engaging in meaningful spoken interaction (Irianti et al., 2024). These issues are often compounded in private tutoring settings, where there is less peer interaction and motivation compared to formal classroom environments. Additionally, the lack of structured pedagogical approaches in private tutoring results in inconsistent teaching practices that can hinder the improvement of speaking skills (Gonzalez-Torres et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding how private tutors can optimize their teaching strategies to address these challenges is vital for enhancing English speaking skills in Indonesia.

The growing popularity of private English tutoring in Indonesia, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas, underscores its importance in language education. While private tutoring offers personalized learning experiences tailored to individual students' needs, it also brings unique challenges (Read et al., 2020). Tutors often work in less formal environments, relying on their creativity and resourcefulness to implement strategies that improve speaking skills. However, these strategies are often unregulated and can vary widely, leading to inconsistent results. Despite its popularity, private tutoring in Indonesia remains under-researched, particularly concerning the specific strategies used by tutors to improve speaking skills (Talaat et al., 2023). This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the role of private English tutors in enhancing students' speaking abilities and how these tutors manage the various challenges they face.

A variety of studies have examined the importance of speaking skills in English language education and identified strategies to improve them. Coetzer et al. (2023) emphasize the role of communicative competence, noting that active learning techniques such as role-play and simulation can significantly enhance speaking skills. Benítez-Correa et al. (2024) advocate for interactive methods that encourage students to use English in real-life contexts. However, most of the existing research focuses on formal classroom settings, with limited attention

given to private tutoring environments. Xiong & Eng (2024) outline numerous language teaching strategies, but few studies have explored how these methods are applied in private tutoring, especially in non-Western contexts. This gap in the research highlights the need for a deeper understanding of private tutoring practices, particularly in enhancing students' speaking skills.

Prior research has also pointed out several limitations faced by private tutors, including irregular attendance, limited resources, and the diverse needs of students. Herda et al. (2024) and Zou (2024) highlight motivational barriers, anxiety, and vocabulary limitations among students as significant challenges that hinder progress in speaking. While the use of digital tools, such as speech apps, to improve speaking skills has been explored, most studies have focused on formal educational settings. There is a lack of research on how these strategies are implemented in private tutoring sessions. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the practical solutions private tutors can use to overcome these challenges and enhance students' speaking skills.

This study offers a unique contribution by examining the role of private English tutoring in language education, an area that has been largely overlooked. While strategies such as role-play, interactive methods, and digital tools are well-documented in formal educational settings, their application in private tutoring has not been sufficiently explored. Additionally, the shift towards online tutoring due to the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new dynamics to how these strategies are applied (Altınbaş & Savaş, 2020). This study will examine how private English tutors adjust their teaching methods in response to these challenges, providing insight into effective strategies for improving speaking proficiency.

The central research question of this study is how private English teachers' strategies impact students' speaking skills. Specifically, the study aims to identify the most effective strategies used by private tutors, the challenges they face, and how they overcome these obstacles. By investigating the strengths and weaknesses of various teaching approaches, this research will contribute to improving private English instruction in Indonesia. Ultimately, the study seeks to offer recommendations for optimizing private tutoring strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities, contributing to the broader field of language education in non-formal settings.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2023). This approach was chosen because the primary focus of the study was to explore in-depth the strategies employed by private tutors to improve students' speaking skills in the context of English

language learning. Case studies allow researchers to understand phenomena occurring within a specific and more detailed context, providing deeper insight into the teaching practices employed by private tutors. This study focused on a small group of participants representing a relevant context: experienced private English tutors, to identify the strategies, challenges, and solutions they encountered in teaching speaking skills.

The research location was Palangka Raya and its surrounding areas, with the location selected based on the significant need for developing English speaking skills outside of formal settings. Palangka Raya was chosen because it is a growing city with a substantial student population, many of whom utilize non-formal educational services, such as private English tutoring. Many students in this area face difficulties communicating in English orally, despite having received a formal education. Therefore, choosing this location allowed the researcher to obtain data relevant to the challenges faced by students and private tutors in this context.

The data collection technique used was semi-structured interviews. This technique was chosen because it provided the researcher with the flexibility to explore various aspects of the private tutors' experiences and perspectives on managing English-speaking skills learning in greater depth. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to maintain focus on the research topic while also providing participants with the opportunity to express their views freely and in-depth (Sulistiyo, 2023). The interviews were conducted with five participants selected through purposive sampling, requiring participants to meet certain criteria, such as actively teaching private English lessons and having at least one year of experience teaching speaking skills. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed for further analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques, which involved several stages: first, transcription of interview data was conducted to convert conversations into written text (Soesana et al., 2023). Then, the data was analyzed through a process of condensation, in which the researcher identified and filtered information relevant to the research focus. Next, data reduction was carried out to group similar data and organize it into broader themes. The data display process allows researchers to present data in a more understandable format, such as tables or diagrams, to further understand emerging patterns. Finally, data verification is conducted by re-examining preliminary findings and the alignment between the data and relevant theories, ensuring that the data interpretation is accurate and accountable.

Data validity is checked using several techniques to enhance the credibility of the research results. The procedures implemented include extended engagement with participants, allowing researchers to gain a deeper

understanding and prevent misinterpretation. Furthermore, member checking techniques are used to verify the transcribed interviews with participants, allowing them to provide feedback or confirmation of the accuracy of the collected data. Transferability is also ensured by providing in-depth contextual descriptions of the participants' backgrounds and the research setting. Dependability is achieved by detailed recording of each stage of the research process, allowing other researchers to replicate the study. By using this approach, the research is expected to provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the strategies used by private English teachers in improving students' speaking skills, as well as the factors that influence the success or challenges they face in the teaching process.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Interactive Strategies to Improve Student Conversation**

In this study, teaching strategies to improve speaking skills were identified as various methods used by private English tutors to enhance students' speaking abilities. These strategies are centered around a communication-based approach and student-centered learning, where students are actively encouraged to participate and engage in situations that require direct language use. Key strategies included role-playing, storytelling, task- and project-based learning, and the integration of technology to support speaking practice. These strategies not only improve students' fluency in speaking but also help overcome psychological barriers, such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes, which often hinder students from fully engaging in speaking activities.

One strategy highlighted by the tutors was role-playing and storytelling, which was particularly useful in simulating real-life conversations. An experienced private tutor explained that role-playing helps students imagine and engage in conversational scenarios that closely resemble real-life interactions. "I believe that with role-playing, students can more easily picture and engage in real-life conversation situations," the tutor shared. These activities also support students in developing creativity in their language use, helping them speak more fluently. Storytelling was another method utilized to enhance communication skills, allowing students to practice fluency and build confidence in a dynamic.

Another important strategy used by tutors involved task- and project-based learning, which was found to be especially effective in developing students' ability to speak clearly and confidently. One tutor mentioned that assignments such as creating podcasts or video blogs not only provided students with a chance to practice speaking but also allowed them to convey ideas in a more realistic context. "Assignments like creating podcasts or video blogs allow students to practice speaking in a meaningful and practical way, making their

language learning more relevant," the tutor noted. These tasks engage students in authentic speaking experiences, helping them improve their verbal interactions by providing opportunities to practice English in ways that mirror real-world situations.

Additionally, technology-based strategies were found to be highly effective in improving speaking skills. Many tutors used tools like WhatsApp for voice messages, and platforms such as YouTube and TED-Ed to introduce speaking materials. One tutor integrated tools like Google Jamboard and online meeting rooms to facilitate more interactive conversation simulations during online lessons. This approach demonstrates the importance of digital media in supporting speaking skills, as it allows students to engage in diverse speaking tasks that would otherwise be challenging in traditional settings. The use of technology increases student engagement, offering more varied and immersive experiences in learning spoken English.

The patterns that emerged from the data indicate that effective speaking instruction in private tutoring settings heavily relies on interactive, communicative, and technology-driven approaches. Fun and engaging activities such as games and storytelling have been shown to enhance students' confidence in speaking. Overall, private tutors who emphasize direct, contextual interaction and make use of digital tools can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment, fostering the maximum development of students' speaking skills.

### **Motivational Challenges, the Key to Learning Progress**

In this study, adapting strategies to student needs refers to the flexibility applied by private tutors in adapting teaching methods to the characteristics and needs of each student. This strategy involves adjusting teaching methods based on the student's confidence level, age, and ability. In the context of private tutoring, teaching is not conducted with a uniform approach; instead, tutors actively modify their approach to suit the student's individual development and needs. For example, shy students may require a gentler, more gradual approach, while students with higher abilities may be given more complex challenges to stimulate further development. This strategy includes scaffolding techniques, challenges tailored to the student's skill level, and the integration of insights from formal classroom teaching.

**Table 1. An Observation of Motivational Challenges The Key to Learning Progress**

<b>Observation Excerpt</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
The tutor started with yes/no questions, then moved on to sentence completion exercises, and gradually progressed to free speaking tasks for shy students.	Scaffolding Techniques	35%

The tutor provided mini-debates and opinion discussion tasks to higher-level students to stimulate their speaking skills.	Tailored Challenges	25%
The tutor frequently adapted private speaking tasks based on their experience teaching in formal classrooms, such as group discussions and presentations.	Classroom Insight Integration	40%

Based on the data presented in Table 1, most tutors use scaffolding as their primary approach to support shy or low-confidence students. This is reflected in interviews with the PA, who stated that she begins with yes/no questions and then progresses to sentence completion exercises before moving on to free-speaking tasks for more shy students. This technique was recorded in 35% of all observations. Furthermore, for students with higher skill levels, HH more frequently implemented tailored challenges such as mini-debates and opinion discussions, which were reflected in 25% of the observations.

During the observations, researchers noted that the adaptive approach used by tutors varied significantly depending on the student's skill level. They found that tutors were more likely to provide greater challenges to students with higher abilities, while providing gradual support to shyer or less confident students. Furthermore, instruction that integrates insights from formal classes has been shown to improve the quality of instruction, allowing tutors to teach speaking skills in a more structured and relevant context. This suggests that formal teaching experience provides valuable insights that can enrich teaching strategies in private classes, making them more targeted and meaningful for student development. Implementing tailored challenges and adapting to student needs is key to student motivation and learning progress, for both shy and more capable students.

### **Diverse Methods Adapt to Individual Needs**

Challenges in teaching speaking skills in private tutoring sessions refer to the obstacles faced by tutors in implementing effective strategies tailored to each student's unique needs. These obstacles involve psychological issues such as anxiety and low motivation, as well as practical challenges such as time constraints, limited teaching materials, and technological difficulties. While some students may struggle with anxiety or low confidence, others may lack motivation or rely on memorization. Tutors, recognizing these varied needs, adapt their teaching methods to address the individual characteristics of their students, ensuring that each student can develop their speaking skills effectively.

For instance, one tutor pointed out that anxiety is a major challenge, particularly for shy students. "Many students are afraid to speak in English because they fear making mistakes, which hinders their practice," the tutor said.

In response, the tutor uses a gradual approach, beginning with low-pressure tasks such as yes/no questions and slowly progressing to more open-ended speaking tasks. This adaptation helps students gain confidence at their own pace, with the tutor's approach tailored to each student's level of anxiety and confidence. Another tutor shared that motivation can be low, especially after long school days. "Many students are tired and lack the energy to engage in speaking practice after school," the tutor explained. To address this, the tutor adapts the lessons by incorporating more engaging activities, such as mini-debates and opinion discussions, for students with higher energy and motivation. For those less motivated, the tutor uses simpler tasks to reignite their interest and keep them engaged, showing how teaching methods are adjusted to match the individual student's level of motivation.

The study also highlighted that limited time often restricts the tutor's ability to implement a comprehensive lesson plan. Short sessions or absences due to extracurricular activities can limit speaking practice. Tutors adapt by prioritizing speaking tasks that focus on high-impact practice within the limited time available. For example, the tutor may focus on role-play exercises in short sessions, as they provide quick and effective opportunities for students to practice real-life conversations.

Additionally, the challenge of finding suitable teaching materials is common among private tutors. Many rely on online resources that are not specifically designed for private tutoring. Tutors, however, adapt by creating their materials tailored to the individual student's learning needs. For students with higher proficiency, the tutor may introduce complex materials such as advanced dialogues or debates, while for beginners, simpler vocabulary and conversational exercises are used. This study illustrates that effective private tutoring requires tutors to use diverse methods tailored to each student's individual needs. Tutors who are flexible and adaptive in their approach can effectively address challenges and ensure that students, regardless of their struggles, can progress in their speaking skills. By modifying their teaching strategies based on students' psychological states, skill levels, and motivation, tutors create an environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

### **Private Tutor: Creativity is the Key to Speaking**

In this study, the solutions implemented to address challenges in teaching speaking focus on adaptive and creative methods used by private tutors to overcome barriers faced by both students and themselves. These solutions include flexible lesson planning, student motivation techniques, the creation of DIY (Do It Yourself) teaching materials, and the use of media to build student

confidence. Each of these solutions not only responds to the challenges of private tutoring but also highlights the importance of creativity in the teaching process. Tutors frequently use creative methods to engage students, overcome resource limitations, and create an environment conducive to speaking practice. This creativity is a central element in improving students' speaking skills.

**Table 2. An Observation of Private Tutor Creativity is the Key to Speaking**

Observation Excerpt	Indicator	Percentage
PA always prepares backup activities or simplifies tasks when students feel tired or lose focus.	Flexible Lesson Planning	30%
HH assigns mini-goals, such as speaking for 2 minutes, or uses topics students enjoy to enhance motivation.	Student Motivation Techniques	25%
DR frequently creates his worksheets and searches for free materials online, especially when he lacks ready-to-use teaching resources.	DIY Materials and Open Resources	35%
HH uses tasks like podcasts or WhatsApp voice notes to help students practice speaking without the pressure of real-time performance, which boosts their confidence.	Media-based Confidence Building	10%

Another solution, student motivation techniques, was observed in 25% of cases. Tutor HH employs creative strategies like setting mini-goals, such as asking students to speak for two minutes, and using topics they enjoy. "I use topics that interest the students, which makes them feel more motivated to speak," she said. This creative approach helps to maintain engagement and encourages students to practice speaking, overcoming the hesitation that often comes from fear of making mistakes. By tapping into students' interests and making goals achievable, tutors foster an environment that encourages spontaneous and confident speaking.

The use of DIY materials and open resources highlights the creativity required to make lessons effective despite limited resources. Tutor DR explained that when formal resources are not available, he creates his worksheets or searches for free, open-source materials. "I adapt lessons by creating custom worksheets or using online resources to meet the needs of my students," he shared. This demonstrates the innovative approach that private tutors take to ensure that the material is relevant and personalized. By crafting their materials, tutors bring flexibility and creativity to the learning process, which ensures that students remain engaged and the lessons are tailored to their specific needs.

Media-based confidence building, although observed less frequently (10%), also plays a significant role in the creative strategies used by tutors. The data reveal that private tutor creativity is indeed key to speaking improvement.

Through flexible lesson planning, motivational strategies, DIY materials, and creative use of media, tutors continuously innovate to create learning experiences that foster student engagement and improve speaking skills. By tapping into their creativity, tutors are able to overcome various challenges, ensuring that their students not only engage in speaking practice but also gain the confidence to use English more effectively in real-world situations.

## **Discussion**

The results of this study indicate that interactive strategies in teaching speaking skills, such as role-playing, storytelling, and task- and project-based learning, are effective in improving students' speaking skills. This strategy aligns with teaching theories that emphasize the importance of communicative approaches and student-centered learning, as proposed by Sain (2025). They argue that techniques involving live conversation and applying language in real-life contexts can strengthen students' speaking skills. The main difference found in this study is the use of technology, such as WhatsApp and YouTube, which serve to enrich the online speaking learning experience. This approach aligns with the findings of Safitri (2025) and Wideasari et al. (2024), who emphasized the role of technology in supporting language learning. However, this study demonstrates that digital media serves as a tool that makes it easier for students to practice speaking without the pressure of real-time interaction, representing a novel approach in language teaching.

In terms of adapting strategies to meet individual student needs, this study shows that tutors use flexible approaches, such as scaffolding for shy students and increasing challenges for higher-ability students. This is consistent with constructivist learning theory, which states that effective learning occurs when material is tailored to students' abilities and developmental levels (Herlina, 2024; Nisa & R, 2024). This research also aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of teaching that can be tailored to individual student needs. The successful use of scaffolding techniques in this study demonstrates that providing tasks appropriate to students' abilities can enhance their motivation and development in speaking (Bali & Heru, 2024; Jali, 2025). The practical implication is the importance of teaching sensitive to students' needs in increasing their self-confidence and reducing anxiety, which often hinders speaking skills.

However, the results of this study also highlight challenges faced in teaching speaking individually, such as student psychological issues, including anxiety and low motivation, as well as limited time and teaching materials. Although extensive literature indicates that anxiety can hinder students' speaking skills, this study highlights how tutors can adapt their approaches to

overcome these barriers (Abdullah, 2024; Umar & Khaer, 2024). One solution identified is flexible lesson planning and the application of motivational techniques, such as setting small goals to stimulate students' enthusiasm. This suggests that teaching strategies oriented toward students' emotional and psychological needs are crucial for improving their learning outcomes (Aziz & Sain, 2025). The practical implication of these findings is the need for tutor training to identify and address students' psychological barriers, which can significantly impact their engagement in language learning.

Furthermore, the use of media to build student confidence also suggests that technology can enrich students' speaking learning experiences. This aligns with literature supporting the use of technology to create more interactive conversation simulations and reduce tension during speaking practice (Khoiroh et al., 2024; Putri, 2023). Although technology is often used in formal education, this study demonstrates that implementing digital tools such as WhatsApp voice notes and online learning platforms in private tutoring is an effective innovation to overcome space and time constraints (Hina, 2024; Munawwaroh, 2024). The theoretical implication is that integrating digital media into speaking instruction not only helps create a more interactive experience but also boosts student confidence by providing opportunities for practice without direct pressure.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that tutor creativity plays a key role in overcoming challenges faced during the speaking learning process. Tutors who are able to adapt their teaching approaches, whether through adapting scaffolding techniques, media use, or motivational strategies, can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment for students. These results highlight the importance of flexibility and creativity in private English tutoring, which in turn contribute to improving students' speaking skills. The practical implication of these findings is the importance of training tutors to develop adaptability and creativity in designing instruction tailored to students' individual needs, so they can optimize their students' speaking potential in a private tutoring context.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of interactive teaching strategies employed by private English tutors to enhance students' speaking skills. Key findings reveal that communication-based approaches, such as role-playing, storytelling, and task-based learning, effectively improve students' fluency while overcoming psychological barriers like anxiety and fear of making mistakes. The use of technology, such as voice notes on WhatsApp and interactive platforms like Google Jamboard, further enriches the learning experience, fostering a more engaging and flexible environment. These strategies not only support language

development but also demonstrate the crucial role of adaptive teaching methods tailored to individual student needs. This study contributes to the understanding of how private tutors' creativity and adaptability can significantly impact students' speaking proficiency, offering valuable insights for improving informal language education.

However, the research also has limitations, particularly in its focus on a small sample of private tutors in a specific geographic area, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand to include a broader range of tutors from diverse regions and educational backgrounds to explore the effectiveness of these strategies across different contexts. Additionally, further investigation into the long-term impact of these strategies on students' speaking skills and motivation would provide a deeper understanding of how these methods contribute to sustained language development.

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