




## Navigating English Teaching: Challenges and Strategies of Generation Z Teachers in the Digital Age

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### ABSTRACT

This article explores the challenges and strategies that Generation Z teachers encounter in teaching English in the digital age. The method employed in this research is a case study approach, involving six English teachers from various schools as respondents. The objective of this research was to determine the challenges Gen Z teachers face in the English learning process and to explore their strategies for overcoming these obstacles. The findings reveal that Gen Z teachers face challenges, including classroom management issues, low student motivation, technological limitations, and the need to adapt to an independent curriculum. However, they can respond to these challenges through innovative strategies such as collaborative learning and gamification using digital technologies. Teachers also use platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Google Classroom, and Quizizz to create interactive learning experiences that align with today's students' characteristics. This study highlights the unique role of Gen Z teachers as agents of change, who are adaptive, creative, and responsive to technological developments and the evolving needs of students. The findings provide essential input for education policy and the development of more contextualized teacher training.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital era, the emergence of Generation Z as educators is bringing significant changes to teaching methods, particularly in English education. According to Dimock (2019, Generation Z is those born from 1997 onwards, which amounts to about 2.47 billion people worldwide (Huss, 2023). This generation, known as digital natives, demands two specific things: teaching should match the needs of alert learning, which is swift, efficient, and sensible, and technology must be standardized, given their experience with technology and the internet as an integral part of everyday life. (Vitvitskaya et al., 2022).

Generation Z educators face numerous educational challenges, including recent viral incidents on social media platforms such as TikTok, X, and Instagram, in which teachers are reprimanded for being too strict, students ask peculiar inquiries, and technology is integrated in remote educational settings. Furthermore, the principal challenge educators frequently encounter is the limited integration of technology, which hinders the enhancement of student motivation and refinement of the teaching process in the classroom, ultimately impeding the rapid acquisition of English by students with diverse characteristics. (Boy Jon et al., 2021). Teachers must adjust and devise learning ways to address these issues. The educator might employ various digital platforms to enrich the interactive teaching and learning experience, thereby comprehending the demands and preferences of students from the same generation.

On the other hand, learning strategies refer to the plans and methodologies that

educators devise to achieve practical learning objectives (Mega et al., 2019). Concurrently, Colombo (2012) posits that learning strategies are methods used to present material to students during the educational process, encompassing variation, design, and classroom regulations when imparting learning skills (Mustika & Wardah, 2021). According to Oxford (1990), learning strategies are particular behaviours students employ to facilitate more effective, efficient, autonomous, and enjoyable learning experiences. (Chilmy et al., 2020). In conclusion, learning strategies are activities that educators and learners formulate and execute to achieve educational objectives.

Five previous studies have raised the same topic, such as (Utomo et al., 2020), (Erlina et al., 2024), (Erniyanti Nur Fatahhela Dewi & Mentari Pratami, 2022) The goal is to observe the challenges and strategies faced by English tutors at the junior high school and madrasah levels. (Dejacto et al., 2023) Includes an exploration of the constraints and approach specific to teaching Generation Z at the secondary level. (Afna, 2024) Analyzed the obstacles and solutions in the effort to revitalize language education in Indonesian higher education. Although most previous research has examined teacher challenges and strategies, it has generally lacked specificity in its approaches. Without differentiating between generations, not many have highlighted the unique role of Generation Z teachers as digital natives. In addition, previous studies have focused solely on theoretical aspects and have not explored the real-life experiences of Gen Z instructors who face the challenges of teaching English in the digital age.

Building on the background information above, this research examines the challenges Gen Z teachers face and the strategies they use in teaching English lessons. This study analyzes the teaching methods English language instructors use and identifies the challenges they face in the classroom. It is hoped that this research will help the new generation understand how to teach English and provide suggestions for the professional development of teachers in the future.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study design. Qualitative research uses inductive reasoning and relies on objective, participatory observation of social phenomena (Hulu, 2024). Furthermore, as stated by Creswell (2009), a case study is utilized to gather comprehensive data from diverse groups of individuals within a specific context or situation (Lukas & Yunus, 2021). This method is chosen to gain an understanding of Gen Z educators' experiences and perspectives on teaching English. This approach allows the researcher to explore the social and cultural contexts that influence teaching practices.

This study will examine the obstacles and methodologies used by digital-native educators in delivering English instruction. The instrument utilized in this study is a semi-structured interview, which will be conducted in person or online. Data will be gathered through interviews with six English instructors who use technology from various schools, as they represent the research subject and belong to Generation Z. The collected data will undergo thematic analysis, a technique that identifies, interprets, and reports patterns and themes. (Braun & Clarke, 2023). The following are five interview questions, including:

1. Recently, a viral incident on social media occurred where a teacher was assertive but ended up in jail. As a digital native teacher, what are your thoughts on this case? Have you ever experienced this?
2. What is your biggest challenge when teaching English lessons as a Gen Z teacher?
3. Gen Z is the tech-savvy generation; how do you utilize technology in English learning?
4. What learning strategies do you use as a digital native teacher to attract students' attention?
5. What are your future expectations as an English teacher in this digital era?

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The interviews with six digital native teachers revealed multiple results that will be analyzed into five themes, specifically: (a) teachers' perspectives and experiences of viral cases, (b) Challenges, (c) Utilization of technology, (d) strategies, and (e) Expectations.

### **Theme 1: teachers' perspectives and experiences of viral cases**

According to the teacher's perspective, incidents of this nature do not occur at their institution; however, teachers must learn from this incident to foster effective communication with student guardians. Additionally, educators may consider engaging parents in discussions regarding regulations to prevent future misunderstandings.

*Teaching is challenging due to the prevalence of viral cases, and strict actions can be perceived as overly aggressive. Maintaining good communication between teachers, students, and parents is crucial. (teacher 2)*

Like the second teacher, the fifth educator agreed that the teacher must communicate with parents. This aims to build trust between parents and schools by facilitating discussions on school activities and regulations. Effective communication plays an essential role in building students' character and educational standards, thereby minimizing potential problems (Asrar et al., 2018).

*Teachers and parents of learners cooperate and consequently discuss rules and activities at school for cases that no longer exist (teacher 5)*

Similarly, the fifth teachers' school conducts annual meetings to promote effective communication. Furthermore, the educators implement training to enhance pupils' sense of security and mitigate bullying. This initiative aims to prevent incidents from becoming viral on social media.

*Teachers must address digital influence through annual meetings, training, and good listening, promoting comfort, preventing bullying, and fostering positive communication between teachers and students. (teacher 6)*

On the other hand, Educators argue that boldness is vital for instructors. Numerous students in the digital era exhibit adverse habits, and some even challenge instructors who perceive themselves as authoritative. Assertiveness should be adjusted according to pedagogical methods to achieve favourable results (Salainti & Sanger, 2024). It is crucial for academic success.

*Based on my experience, firmness is essential, considering today's students are brave. The firmness here is adjusted to the educator's method so that it is not just firm and pretentious, but not rude (teacher 1)*

Student attitudes then and now are very different. They can be influenced by the times and digital media. Teachers' assertiveness can help students change their bad attitudes. A firm attitude allows them to develop into good individuals.

*Recently, I saw a student set fire to a teacher's motorcycle after being offended by advice on social media. Highlighting this incident, I believe being strict with students is necessary to change their attitudes for the future. (teacher 4)*

While parental indulgence is instinctive, excessive pampering can have adverse effects on children. The negative consequences of indulging children include a lack of discipline, selfishness, diminished responsibility, and increased dependence on parents. Such attitudes can persist in the educational environment, making instructors feel overwhelmed. In certain instances, parents may refuse to acknowledge that their children need punishment, despite the natural result of their faults, even when educational institutions strive to provide the best for their children.

*I have experienced a similar case, but it did not reach the legal realm. Parents often indulge children, leading to arbitrary personality development, while teachers may reject this, as they cannot punish unless an infraction occurs to instil discipline. (teacher 3)*

Gen Z teachers realize the importance of communicating with parents to prevent conflicts and misunderstandings that can spread on social media. Firmness in education is still considered necessary, but it must be done using a pedagogical approach. In addition, preventive efforts such as regular meetings, student training, and parent participation in

shaping school rules are implemented to create a safe and positive learning environment.

## Theme 2: Challenges

The second theme is teaching challenges. Generation Z educators face complex challenges in teaching English, including class management, which involves managing student diversity across different backgrounds, abilities, and interests. Indonesia considers English as an external language, not a second language. (At & Bulukumba, 2009) Effective class management is crucial for the success or failure of teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers must learn how to manage the class effectively to ensure that the learning process is not equated with that of other subjects.

*My challenge is in classroom management. Every student has a unique background, which influences their learning style. (teacher 3)*

At the same time, Teacher Number One agreed that students' backgrounds presented a challenge for teachers. Teaching in an inclusive environment requires special strategies. Cultural diversity and language skills are also some of the background differences among students.

*My main challenge in teaching English in inclusive learning environments is creating instructional materials and strategies that cater to students' diverse backgrounds, language proficiency, and cultural contexts. (Teacher 1)*

Classroom management challenges include maintaining student discipline during lessons and overcoming students' lack of excitement and confidence. Consequently, anxiety diminishes learning motivation (Negeri et al., 2023). The primary task for educators is to render English lessons engaging, foster student engagement, and alleviate perceptions of difficulty associated with the language.

*During my teaching career, the main challenge that I often face is how to get students interested in English lessons, as well as motivating them to be enthusiastic about learning (teacher 2)*

As with the previous teacher, maintaining discipline and engaging their interest in lessons, especially in the early grades, is challenging for Gen Z teachers. Students are still in the early stages of development at this grade level, so they are more easily distracted and tend to play alone. Especially lessons that they consider difficult, such as English.

*My biggest challenge is disciplining and engaging the children, so I teach in grades one through three. Many of them play alone because they think English is difficult (teacher 5)*

In addition to management classes, curriculum change is challenging for teachers in the learning process. Even though the independent curriculum promotes a more autonomous, creative, and applicable approach to learning, some teachers are not ready for it. This is due to a lack of understanding, when teachers do not understand, it affects the material taught, how students learn, and the impact of education trained in the community. Therefore, teachers and schools need to attend training and adapt.

*The main challenge I encountered while teaching was the children's limited English language proficiency. This was due to the elimination of the UN exam from the curriculum change; as teachers, we were unprepared and did not understand it. (teacher 6)*

The independent curriculum is implemented by emphasizing 21st-century skills, specifically teacher creativity, which utilizes today's technology (Marmoah et al., 2023). Schools in many villages and remote areas are not ready due to limited facilities. In Indonesia, access to technology is not evenly distributed owing to a lack of digital literacy, infrastructure limitations, and inadequate educator training and development (Rabani et al., 2023). This problem is particularly significant for Gen Z educators, as they often lack access to digital technology.

*My biggest problem, of course, is technology. When I want to teach by presenting videos, technology tools are not yet available, and the internet connection is sometimes intermittent. (teacher 4)*

Generation Z educators in Indonesia face challenges in teaching English, especially in

classroom management and student diversity. Difficulties creating inclusive materials, curriculum changes that are not understood, and limited access to technology in remote areas further exacerbate the situation. Enhanced teacher training and improved educational infrastructure are crucial for creating an effective learning environment.

### Theme 3: Utilization of technology

Generation Z exhibits distinct characteristics compared to other generations. Having grown up in the digital age, it is evident that they have developed strong competencies in technology (Venida, 2022). As tech-savvy digital-native teachers, they use various platforms, including animated YouTube videos, as teaching media. This makes teaching more practical, learners will understand better because they see examples directly, and animated videos will attract students' attention.

*I use online learning platforms, such as cartoon animation videos on YouTube, to improve students' vocabulary. This is more effective and practical (teacher 5)*

Just like the previous, Teacher Fourth also uses YouTube. YouTube is an effective platform for teaching and learning, which students increasingly favour. Many YouTube channels offer free English courses that cover grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and everyday phrases. YouTube is an effective, engaging medium that can motivate students to learn, and it is the right medium to deliver learning materials (Syam, 2023). YouTube also makes teaching more flexible and can provide teachers with examples of various learning styles suitable for students.

*Use platforms like YouTube to watch learning videos and follow accounts that focus on English, then practice them during the learning process (teacher 4)*

Besides YouTube, teachers also utilize social media platforms such as TikTok. TikTok is the current trend application favoured by young people. The content presented is diverse, and teachers and students can use this platform as a learning medium to practice English content.

*I take videos from TikTok and then practice with students during class. Current technology simplifies teaching for Gen Z teachers, making it practical, effective, and student-friendly. (teacher 1)*

In contrast to those mentioned above, some educators use learning tools such as YouTube, Kahoot, Mind Map, Quizizz, and others. Lari (2014) argues that presenting PowerPoint will help teachers review material and save time (Abulhul, 2021). Meanwhile, Quizizz is a learning platform that teachers use to create engaging, fun student tests. It combines features of gamification elements, such as leaderboards and limited-time quizzes (Fadilah, 2023).

*I use learning applications like mind maps and PowerPoint for material explanations and Quizizz or Kahoot for daily tests, enhancing student interaction and utilizing digital tools. (teacher 2)*

At the same time, other Gen Z teachers also utilize technology, such as Google Classroom, to organize more flexible learning and tailor materials to students' needs. Interactive applications such as Quizizz encourage active, collaborative participation in the classroom. Additionally, communication media such as WhatsApp facilitate coordination among teachers, students, and parents.

*I often use Google Classroom to organize assignments and materials, allowing me to tailor them to my students' abilities. Using Quizizz helps them become more enthusiastic and engaged in class. (teacher 3)*

Like the previous teacher, the sixth teacher uses learning apps like Kahoot, an online game that assesses students' understanding of the route content (Oktaria et al., 2021). Educators also operate learning applications, such as Google Classroom, to organize assignments and learning materials and communicate with students (Arief, H., Saliya, K., & Muliati, 2022). Teachers can update materials in real-time through these platforms, and students can access them at any time.

*Before teaching, I usually prepare several interactive quizzes and*

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*Kahoots for student pretests. I then provide animated videos or*  
*explanations that I have summarised on a mind map. I also use Google*  
*Classroom to distribute materials and collect student assignments*  
*(teacher 6)*

Gen Z teachers demonstrate their adaptability by effectively using digital technology. They utilize various platforms, including YouTube, TikTok, Google Classroom, Quizizz, and Kahoot. However, some teachers lack sufficient access to technology, especially in remote village areas. This is an obstacle for teachers when it comes to optimizing technology in English teaching.

#### **Theme 4: Strategies**

A learning strategy is a method for determining how to achieve a learning objective. (Paudel, 2019). Learning strategies aim to achieve effective, efficient learning outcomes, enabling students to realize their full potential. The use of a more effective approach will lead to greater achievement for the learner. (Tresnaningsih, 2022). As digital natives, Gen Z teachers have numerous ways to make lessons engaging and aligned with today's learning, including implementing innovative strategies. Some of the learning strategies identified through the interview results include collaborative and gamification approaches.

*I usually divide the class into small teams and give them instructions to*  
*work together on the task, helping them get used to expressing their*  
*ideas and supporting one another. (teacher 1)*

Collaborative strategies enhance students' abilities and foster their confidence and communication skills, particularly in speaking English. Students feel more comfortable learning in groups and are not afraid to make mistakes. This atmosphere will encourage them to be more active and dare to argue in class.

*When they learn in groups, students are more willing to help and engage*  
*in discussions. Besides that, they look more confident speaking English*  
*(teacher 2)*

Similar to the previous teacher, the third teacher also uses collaborative strategies. This is because collaborative strategy learning can enable students to think independently, discuss with friends, conduct small-scale research, and refine their thinking skills. (Kumala & Pandonge, 2020). With this strategy, students gain a deeper understanding of the material and develop their social and collaborative skills.

*With collaborative strategies, students can exchange opinions and*  
*complete tasks together. I see that they are becoming more active and*  
*are daring to speak English. (teacher 3)*

Some educators incorporate gamification strategies into their teaching and learning processes, unlike previous teachers. Gamification has become a popular strategy among Gen Z lately, as it has proven effective in attracting students' attention. Through gamification strategies, teachers not only provide entertainment for students but also facilitate knowledge retention (Rahmani, 2020).

*At the beginning or end of the lesson, I usually include interactive quizzes*  
*or English games. Students become more eager to understand the*  
*material because they feel they are playing. (teacher 6)*

The fifth teacher also highlighted the gamification strategy. This strategy is used because this generation of students grows up in an interactive environment. It can help create a fun learning atmosphere. Gamification can include elements such as points or challenges, and educators can motivate learners to engage more actively when the learning process employs this strategy.

*I usually create a point system and prizes for active students. This way,*  
*the class atmosphere is livelier and minimizes student boredom in the*  
*teaching and learning process. (teacher 5)*

In agreement with the previous teacher, the fourth teacher also employs gamification strategies. Through gamification strategies, teachers can transform traditional classroom practices that tend to be passive into dynamic ones by inserting game elements such as competition, achievement, and progress (Suchitra Singh, 2024). This strategy aims to increase

motivation, make lessons more interactive and fun, and encourage active student participation. *Since technology is limited in my school, I utilize simple games with a point system, such as quizzes, to engage students. Students who answer will earn stars or rewards, which makes the atmosphere more exciting. (teacher 4)*

The dominant strategies used by Gen Z teachers are collaborative and gamification strategies. Collaborative strategies increase student motivation, skills, and interest in learning. Gamification strategies create an interactive, fun environment that encourages these students to be more active.

### Theme 6: Expectations

English is a global language or lingua franca (Mesquita, 2021). The majority of countries use English as a means of communication with other tourists. By learning English early on, students are expected to gain insight and learn from foreign sources. Furthermore, mastering English will make it easier to secure jobs and scholarships and allow students to socialize internationally. Technological developments are hoped to enable students to access good-quality English learning.

*I hope students realize the importance of learning English, and it will help them to get jobs and scholarships in the future (teacher 2)*

Excluding learning English can enhance career opportunities, job prospects, social networks, communication, and earning potential. As maintained by Syahputra (2014) mastery of English is a necessity for international companies (Sri Andayani, 2022). Consequently, students need to master English. The primary issue with students' English mastery is their lack of interest, and the solution lies in the teacher's ability to motivate them. Motivation is crucial in the learning process, enabling students to enjoy and achieve learning targets, including English language learning (Umpung et al., 2023).

*Hopefully, in the future, English will become an intriguing subject for all students. As a teacher, I will continue to motivate students to learn English and create opportunities for their success. (teacher 3)*

As stated above, students' global mobility can be enhanced by their proficiency in English, enabling them to study or work abroad. By mastering this language, students can easily adapt to international universities and companies when working. In addition, English can help students understand new cultures and perspectives, enriching their life experiences.

*Through English language learning, I hope that students can easily achieve success, such as achieving their dreams of studying or working abroad. (teacher 5)*

Additionally, English educators prepare pupils to confront global concerns in the dynamic digital age. As times have changed, educators' expectations for their students have become increasingly varied, encompassing not only language proficiency but also the integration of technology in learning. Made Wena (2011) states that educators, instructors, and Learning Technology Developers are crucial in creating novel technological solutions for successful learning, engaging students, and adapting learning speeds to their capabilities (Kurniawan, 2020). Therefore, teachers hope that technology, both now and in the future, can help students learn English more easily.

*As an English teacher in this digital age, I aim to make learning more enjoyable and accessible, utilizing technology to empower students to learn confidently. (teacher 1)*

Schools in a remote village and schools in the capital city are very different. Several factors, including infrastructure, educational quality, curriculum differences, and access to technology, can contribute to it. Following digital development is the first step toward advancing and improving the quality of human resources; however, technology in Indonesia is not evenly distributed. Teachers hope the government can pay attention to schools in remote areas and provide assistance in facilities so they are not left far behind.

*My only wish is that schools in remote areas have the same rights as schools in the capital city. Evenly distributed technology can help students access English learning easily (teacher 4)*

Additionally, learning styles are crucial. This is because they can enhance students' understanding of the material and create a conducive learning environment for teachers and students. According to Saced et al. (2009), students' learning styles that align with how they carry out learning activities will have a positive impact, namely, increasing their learning achievement. However, a few students fail to receive material due to inappropriate learning styles. Therefore, teachers need training to recognize the various learning styles that are appropriate for teaching.

*I hope to continue developing my skills in enhancing student learning. I also hope to create a fun environment. Moreover, I will tailor my teaching methods to suit the students' learning styles. (teacher 6)*

Gen Z teachers expect the quality of English learning to improve. They want students to realize how important English is for their future, whether in the workplace, in study, or in global networking. Teachers also hope that technology can be more equitable so that all students, including those living in remote areas, have equal learning opportunities. In addition, teachers strive to continually improve their skills to create a learning environment that is inclusive, engaging, and tailored to the diverse learning styles of today's students.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results, Generation Z teachers tend to employ innovative learning strategies and use digital technology in English instruction. Digital platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok, Google Classroom, Quizizz, and Kahoot, have become important teaching aids. The use of this platform not only served as a medium to attract students' attention but also helped adjust students' teaching styles and habits for those who grew up in the digital era (Vitvitskaya et al., 2022). Collaborative learning and gamification dominate the strategies because they effectively increase learner participation and competence (Rahmani, 2020);(Ramzan et al., 2023).

These results are consistent with previous research by Erniyanti & Dewi (2022), Utomo et al. (2020), and Erlina et al. (2024). In these studies, the researchers identified several issues in English teaching, including variations in students' backgrounds, a lack of motivation to learn, and difficulties adapting to curriculum changes. In addition, research by Dejacto et al. (2023) and Afna (2024) emphasized the importance of incorporating technology to address learning challenges in the modern era. However, this study has a significant advantage: it focuses explicitly on Gen Z teachers who use a more context- and technology-based approach to learning. This study reveals that Gen Z teachers are highly adaptable in utilizing various digital media, including social media platforms such as TikTok, as practical learning tools. This contrasts with previous, more generalized research (Syam, 2023).

This study supports previous findings that English language teaching in Indonesia faces many challenges. However, it also rejects perspectives that generalize about teachers across generations. Gen Z teachers are crucial to meeting today's students' demands in ways that are more relevant, engaging, and responsive to technological. The implications of these findings suggest that continuous professional training is essential to equip Gen Z teachers with technology-based pedagogical skills (Marmoah et al., 2023). Furthermore, the government should create policies that ensure equal access to digital education infrastructure (Rabani et al., 2023). It is hoped that this research will contribute to the development of teacher education and training policies that are more contextual and relevant to the challenges of the times.

## CONCLUSION

Generation Z teachers face many challenges in teaching English, including classroom management, technology limitations, and students' lack of interest in English lessons. However, they can overcome these challenges with innovative strategies such as gamification and collaborative learning, which have proven effective in improving student engagement, motivation, and communication skills. In addition, using various digital platforms, including YouTube, TikTok, Google Classroom, and Quizzes, helps make learning more interactive, engaging, and aligned with today's students' character. Unlike previous studies, this research specifically examines the role of Gen Z teachers in demonstrating adaptive, creative, and

responsive capacities in the context of the digital era's development. Their sensitivity to technological developments and understanding of student characters make them agents of change in the educational world. Therefore, supporting continuous training, increasing digital competence, and ensuring equal access to technology are crucial for enhancing learning effectiveness, particularly in areas lacking adequate facilities. The researchers hope this study will serve as a guide for developing education policies and teacher training programs that are more relevant and aligned with the needs of the current generation of teachers.

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