ABSTRACT

Moch Najmy Al Hakimy, Negotiating Pedagogy under Overcrowded Classrooms: A Case Study at Three Senior High School in West Java

The The recent expansion of public senior high school class sizes in West Java, mandated by Decree Number 463.1/Kep.323-Disdik/2025 to a maximum of fifty students per class, stands in direct numerical contradiction with the thirty-six-student ceiling set by the national Permendikbud Number 22 Year 2016, creating a structural dilemma for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers tasked with implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) under severely constrained conditions. This study examines how EFL teachers perceive the pedagogical implications of this large-class policy and how they navigate their instructional and classroom management practices in response to it. The research is framed within Communicative Language Teaching and classroom management, which together articulate the pedagogical ideal of interaction and structured learning environments, and is further analysed through the lens of street-level bureaucracy, which positions teachers as frontline policy implementers exercising professional discretion under regulatory and resource constraints.

A qualitative case study approach was adopted, drawing on semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations conducted across three public senior high schools in West Java. Six tenth-grade EFL teachers (T1–T6) participated, providing rich, triangulated data on both their perceptions of the policy and their enacted classroom strategies. The findings reveal that teachers' perceptions of the fifty-student policy are ambivalent and multi-layered: while teachers recognise its equity-driven intent, they also report a measurable erosion of pedagogical ideals, in which CLT survives only in a constrained, small-group form and individualized support largely collapses into class-wide alternatives, accompanied by physical and emotional strain and concern for students' long-term communicative competence. In navigating these constraints, teachers rely on an interlocking repertoire of curriculum simplification, MGMP-based collegial collaboration, representative-sampling assessment, spontaneous in-the-moment improvisation, and spatial and behavioural management tactics, with a

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convergence-divergence pattern emerging between negotiable, professional constraints and non-negotiable, physical-infrastructural ones. This study concludes that EFL teachers function as street-level bureaucrats whose discretion is continuously reshaped by the unresolved contradiction between regional access-oriented and national quality-oriented mandates, and it contributes theoretically, practically, and in terms of policy by offering evidence-based recommendations for teachers, school institutions, educational policymakers, and future researchers seeking to address the pedagogical costs of large-class policies in similar educational contexts.

Keywords: Large Class Size Policy, EFL Teachers, Street-Level Bureaucracy, Communicative Language Teaching, Classroom Management

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