

Teachers' Challenges in Teaching English at Rural Areas

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Abstract:

Nearly all Indonesian schools teach English, even those in the country's rural areas, which is crucial to the country's educational system. Therefore, it appears that the educator, students, and facilities are related to the challenges in rural locations. Therefore, the purpose of this essay is to (1) identify the difficulties faced by teachers when instructing English in rural areas and (2) discuss the contributing causes. This narrative case study used framed by observation, in-depth interviews, and open-ended interviews with the four teachers and four students as its data collection methods. According to the findings, teachers faced several difficulties related to student motivation, the 2013 curriculum, teaching materials and media, student competency, teacher development, and parental support. Furthermore, this research will aid in the professional development of rural teachers.

Keywords: rural areas, teachers' challenges, English teachers

INTRODUCTION

Today, English has gone worldwide, enticing individuals from all over the world to learn it. The goal of English has been claimed to include not just global but also local considerations (Gunantar, 2016). English is considered a foreign language in Indonesia and is required of all pupils. The government has chosen to make English one of the disciplines that must be taught from elementary school through university to increase the quality of Indonesian human resources (Sayuri, 2016). Furthermore, the government has decided that English would become a mandatory subject in Indonesian schools and will be one of the topics evaluated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Students are expected to be able to listen, speak, read, and write in English in school. Anyone who masters these four English abilities will be able to communicate both actively and passively in English. Teaching English becomes significantly more difficult when children study English in a rural school setting. This is connected to both a shortage of resources and the learning environment. Rural schools do not have as many possibilities for students to learn English as metropolitan schools do. There is no information concerning English available.

That's why, students do not know English well in everyday situations, which leads to a lack of motivation to learn English. Even after years of study, most students do not understand, avoid, or respond weirdly to the process of learning a foreign language; just a few students have utilized a variety of strategies, succeeded, and mastered the language. This is an area of language study that is frequently disregarded. Teachers should be concerned with aiding students in developing effective techniques for learning English as a foreign language and gaining educational autonomy (Akbari 2015). To educate students, teachers must be able to see their language abilities such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Teachers in rural areas have challenges in terms of teacher training, teaching strategies, and knowledge of the use of technology in the teaching and learning process. Space and time constraints are examples of facility challenges.

This research has been conducted in MTs Pondok Kubang sub-district, namely MTs MambaulUlum and MTs Qaryatul Jihad. This school is in the border of the city. The access to this school is still many forests and spends the time around 40 minutes from the city. The facilities in this school are inadequate. The students have a little previous knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching English as Foreign Language

Rohmah (2013) state that Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) is the practice of teaching English to students who do not speak English as their first language. TEFL is often taught in the student's own country, either in the public school system or in private schools. TEFL teachers might be native or non-native English speakers. Based on the Minister of Education and Culture's Decree No.060/U/1993 dated February 25, 1993, and the 1989 Basic Law regulating the National Education System, the end objective of English courses in schools is to prepare students to speak English in the age of globalization. For the time being, teaching English is more than a commodity since English is recognized as a global communication tool. Teachers are also characterized as professionals who can give students knowledge that will help them grow, recognize, and gain abilities that will assist them to face future obstacles.

Douglas Brown (1994) said that teaching is the process of leading and encouraging learning, enabling the learner to learn, and creating the circumstances for learning (Drachler & Kirschner, 2012). Your knowledge of how well the student studies will define your educational philosophy, teaching style, strategy, methods, and classroom management. Students are encouraged to enhance their English abilities by listening, speaking, reading, and writing by TEFL educators. Textbooks, audio-visual aids, and technology-based resources are frequently used to promote TEFL. Informal activities, such as role acting and language games, are frequently employed in addition to formal education (Imaniah, 2018).

Rural Area

Howley and Howley (2010) state that rural communities is not only about the size or location of the area, but it also concerns place-based issues such as geographic, economic, social and cultural aspects of the specific place or environment.

Rural is defined as an area marked by isolation in several ways, including significant distance from cities, services, and low population density in opinion from Lingam (2012) and Heeralal (2014). Aziz (2011) defines 'rural' as a place outside of the city with a low population density (Effiong, 2020).

Furthermore, du Plessis (2014) mentions several regional characteristics rural areas according to UNESCO 2005, such as rural distances that are generally far from urban centers; unsupportive topographical conditions, such as road conditions, bridges, and so on; access to various information technologies is very limited; and transportation infrastructures such as buses, taxis; access to services and facilities such as electricity, water, sanitation; health, education, and so on.

Rural regions are distinguished by common living conditions, lifestyles, and cultural trends. The characteristics (cultural and natural heritage) that have been so carefully maintained in the countryside are being passed on to a modern and highly urbanized individualistic culture. As a result, rural regions as a location to live are becoming increasingly appealing to the metropolitan population (Perpar, 2007). Another characteristics the fundamental feature of rural regions is that they are remote from cities and have traditional agricultural management. When considering rural development, difficult access to quality education, healthcare, and other important services becomes an unsolved issue (Dewi, 2020).

Rural areas are typically described as small and family-oriented, with most, if not all, members of the community knowing one another (Morton et al., 2018 in Stone & Évora, 2021). According to The National Center for Education Statistics (2006) and the United States Census Bureau, the following guidelines for rural settings have been established: fringe is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, distant is more than 5 miles but less than 25 miles from an urbanized area, and remote is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area. Although these principles are meant to make cross-regional comparisons easier, they also pose obstacles for educators and researchers. For example, depending on a school's proximity to a densely populated area, all three classifications may coexist inside a single school district (Coady, 2020).

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Challenges in Teaching English at Rural Area

Shikalepo (2019) state that some challenges faced by teachers in rural area. For example, teachers do not have enough time, limited teachers training and teaching technique/strategy in teaching English, there is a dearth of educated and competent English teachers, and there are insufficient facilities.

Based on opinion from Hellsten, McIntyre & Prytula (2011) said that teacher training also constituted a danger to teaching student teachers about place-based challenges in rural surroundings, as the majority of students graduating from teacher training institutes are insufficiently taught and equipped to live and teach in rural regions. It can be observed that in many countries, improving teacher training and reforming the rural education curriculum has become a basic strategy to rural education reform (Cheung, 2021).

Cheung (2021) also state about the most fundamental component affecting teacher quality in teacher education. Pre-service education, induction period education, and in-service education are the three stages of teacher education.

Endriyati (2019) stated that teachers do not have enough time, there is a dearth of educated and competent English teachers, and there are insufficient facilities. According to the OECD and the Asian Development Bank (2015), rural and isolated Indonesian schools "often lack skilled instructors" (p. 271). According to Wang (2006), most rural teachers continue to maintain tight control over the classroom, and lecturing consumes the majority of class time. Teachers frequently consume practically all of the time, leaving little opportunity for students to offer their views or ask questions. In addition to a shortage of qualified instructors, UNICEF Indonesia (2016) said that teachers in distant and rural regions lack proper training in integrating health, nutrition, safety, and psychosocial stimulation for early childhood development, resulting in a high rate of childhood stunting (Febriana et al., 2018).

Saiful and Triyono (2018) assumed that reflective teaching, also known as reflective learning, is a crucial component of teacher professional development, particularly for EFL/ESL teachers. In the context of EFL/ESL, reflection teaching allows EFL/ESL teachers to self-reflect or even analyze their English teaching practice in order to better their learners' and their own learning.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, qualitative research methodologies were applied. According to Bogdan and Taylor, a qualitative technique is a research strategy that generates descriptive data from persons in the form of written or spoken words and observable behavior. In qualitative research, numerous ways to examining natural environments can be employed to achieve research aims.

Using a descriptive case study, this study was conducted to identify the challenges and factors confronting teachers in rural Indonesian schools. The concerns and challenges by rural school teachers when teaching in rural schools in the Pondok Kubang sub-district are based on in-depth interviews conducted by researchers and participants. A case study, according to Cresswell (2016), is a research technique that explores a particular instance concerning a single person, organization, or community in order to capture that unique information. Case studies are distinguished from other forms of qualitative research by their concentration on a single "unit individual" or "boundary system." The restriction is whether there is a time limit or a limit to the number of people who can be questioned (for observation).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Several challenges faced by teachers when teaching in rural schools were highlighted as a result of open-ended interviews, including 1) student motivation; 2) 2013 curriculum; 3) teaching resources/media; 4) student competency; 5) teacher development; 6) parental support. These challenges are as follows:

Students Motivation

The biggest problem that English teachers confront is connected to student motivation. Because only half of students are interested in studying English. English teachers have a challenge in teaching English classes. There are several aspects that impact students' motivation to study English.

According to the interviews above, the overwhelming of junior high school students in rural areas do not value English as a subject because of their family background and limited understanding of the world. Another problem mentioned by English teacher 2 MTs Qaryatul Jihad is that students are uninterested in English since they do not utilize it in their everyday lives, making them hesitant to study it. According to Ho (2003), as cited by Rahayu (2016), students who are uninterested in English might exist in rural locations where students have minimal interaction with foreigners and so do not need to study and speak in English. Based on these, student motivation is fully determined by their willingness to participate in learning activities. As a result, student motivation is critical in English teaching. Thus, the researcher concludes that student motivation is a challenge for teachers in rural schools.

2013 CURRICULUM

The 2013 curriculum is the second challenge for English teachers. English is a new subject for students when they attend Junior High School/Madrasah Tsanawiyah. English topics were not included in the 2013 curriculum for primary schools, affecting English studies at junior high schools. This is a challenge for English teachers since they must begin teaching students English at a basic level, whereas English sessions at the secondary level should begin at an intermediate level.

From the interviews above, it was clear that the teachers had challenges in teaching English as a new subject in Junior High Schools. The students had no basic knowledge to follow the lessons. The absence of basic knowledge of English made the teachers teach from the beginning and developed or changed the materials in the 2013 curriculum.

The examples above depict the problems of English teachers attempting to match their students' talents to the expectations of the curriculum. As demonstrated in quotation 4, students at this level must understand the fundamentals of discourse. Students find the course challenging because they lack fundamental English language skills. Improving lesson preparation can help you alter student levels and learning environments (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

Furthermore, students' perspectives stated that teachers faced challenges in teaching them because they lack the basics, so teachers must reintroduce English from the beginning, and their teachers have patient personalities and can adapt teaching methods that are appropriate for them as students attending rural schools. Other pupils claimed that owing to poor facilities, their teachers found it very hard to prepare content. As a result, they only make use of the facilities and resources that are accessible to them.

Teaching Media/Resources

According to the findings of the interviews, all teachers felt that students must be critical for students to be active or participate in the global environment to learn English. Rural schools should not be deprived of offering quality English education due to the global expansion of languages. They also emphasize the need for English for rural students in order to excel in life and stay up with technological advancements. However, they stated that when they implemented the 2013 curriculum, the facilities at their schools did not satisfy the program's criteria.

According to the opinions of the informants above, English language educational facilities in rural areas continue to be a challenge for English teachers to satisfy the expectations of the 2013 curriculum. The K13 curriculum idea is extremely difficult to implement in the classroom. This is owing to the students' poor health and insufficient facilities to facilitate its implementation.

Based on that, the researcher concluded that all English teachers believe that their schools' facilities/resources are insufficient to meet their demands. Their teaching and learning processes are sometimes hampered by inadequate facilities. One of the schools visited for this investigation had only one book for teachers. When teachers assign homework to students, they must rewrite the homework in their books. In the teaching and learning process, this becomes a difficulty. Furthermore, based on the interview, a teacher at one school believed that the information in the government-supplied book was inappropriate for rural schools. He also stated that developing content was challenging owing to a lack of resources.

Students' Competence

As previously said, English is a new subject in Junior High School. Because students do not have fundamental English from elementary school, their competency in Junior High School/ Madrasah Tsanawiyah is relatively low, particularly in vocabulary.

Based on these quotations, it is possible to deduce that English teachers experience challenges due to their students' limited English vocabulary. This inhibits students' comprehension of the material because vocabulary is essential for developing all language abilities. According to River in Nunan (1991), vocabulary is one of the domains of knowledge in language that is highly essential for the success of language learning since individuals cannot utilize the structure and function of language without vocabulary. As a result, students' lack of vocabulary knowledge prevents them from participating effectively in class.

Teacher Development

Based on the statement above, it is apparent that good training is required for the development of teaching abilities in order to become a creative and innovative teacher. English teachers found themselves teaching English to students, particularly those from rural areas, without proper English training. Teachers may struggle to properly implement teaching strategies if they simply have minimal training in theory and practice. Teachers also face challenges when applying the theory given during training to be applied to teaching and learning activities.

Parent's Support

Another issue is a lack of coordination between teachers and parents when it comes to managing student learning. Teacher 3 MTs Qaryatul Jihad shared his experience of assigning homework to students to complete at home, but students completed it at school before turning it into the teacher. Teacher 3 feels that if parents oversee and regulate their children's learning at home, such an event will not occur.

Conclusion

The conclusion highlights the discussion's results based on the research question. As a result, this outlines the difficulties faced by instructors while teaching English as a foreign language in rural locations, namely in MTs Pondok Kubang District, specifically MTs MambaulUlum and MTs Qaryatul Jihad.

English teachers in Indonesia regard teaching English as a difficult endeavor since English is a foreign language. The challenges of teaching English at a rural Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Bengkulu Tengah, Indonesia, are highlighted in this paper. The 2013 curriculum, student competency, student motivation, teaching media, a lack of professional training, and a lack of parental support have all been shown to pose challenges to teachers. In addition, this research has also found what factors cause challenges faced by teachers.

As for the factors, namely the lack of teaching time, thus making teachers have to use appropriate teaching techniques and methods. The next factor is student habits because students still use their local language very often and find it difficult to accept new things in their environment. Then, the factor is the personality of the teacher, because in this rural school, the personality of the teacher also greatly determines the motivation of students to learn English. The most influencing factor is the lack of facilities because there are still many facilities, resources, and networks that do not greatly affect the teaching process.

The outcomes of this study may be used to derive three broad conclusions. First, the government should consider including English language instruction in primary schools in the national curriculum, as well as the influence of school knowledge and the notion that English should be properly taught in primary schools. Second, teacher education institutes must consider answers to the issues that English instructors in MTs are now facing. Inadequate facilities, on the other hand, cause teachers to struggle with the process of learning English. Finally, rather than just transferring responsibility to schools, parents must do more to contribute to their children's academic achievement.

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