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# Challenges of Teaching English for Elementary School Student in Indonesian Rural Areas

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#### ABSTRAK

Mengajar bahasa Inggris di daerah pedesaan menghadirkan tantangan lain bagi guru bahasa Inggris. Selanjutnya, penelitian ini berusaha untuk manganalisis tantangan mengajar bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar di daerah pedesaan Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dan studi kasus digunakan sebagai desain penelitian. Kemudian, dalam penelitian ini, digunakan purposive sampling untuk memilih partisipan. Selanjutnya, tiga guru bahasa Inggris SD berpartisipasi sebagai peserta dalam penelitian ini. Selain itu, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi terstruktur. Kemudian, untuk memvalidasi menggunakan data penelitian ini kredibilitas, transferabilitas, dependabilitas, dan konfirmabilitas. Selanjutnya, analisis tematik digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Studi ini menemukan bahwa ada lima tantangan utama pengajaran bahasa Inggris di daerah pedesaan yaitu status bahasa Inggris dalam kurikulum, kurangnya guru bahasa Inggris yang berkualitas, fasilitas pendidikan yang tidak memadai, sikap negatif siswa terhadap bahasa Inggris dan latar belakang sosial ekonomi siswa. Selain itu, implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah memberikan informasi yang berharga untuk penelitian lebih lanjut dan dapat membantu para pemangku kepentingan sekolah untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, khususnya di tingkat pendidikan dasar.

# ABSTRACT

Teaching English in rural areas presents another hurdle for English language teachers. Furthermore, this present study attempted to analyze the challenges of teaching English for young learners in Indonesian rural area. This study employed qualitative methodology and case study was used as a research design. Then, in this study, purposive sampling was adopted to select the participants. Furthermore, three elementary English teachers were participated as the participants in this study. In addition, the data were collected through semi-structured interview. Then, to validate the data this study used credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Furthermore, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. This study discovered that there were five main challenges of teaching English in rural areas which were the status of English in curriculum, lack of qualified English teacher, insufficient of educational facilities, students' negative attitudes toward English and students' socio-economic background. Additionnally, the implications of this study was provided valuable information for further research and can be helpful to school's stakeholders to increase the quality of the education in the English language learning process, especially at the primary level of education.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, the English language is now extensively spoken throughout the world. The English language becomes the most spoken language around the world with 1,3 billion English users (Crystal, 2003; Nazaruddin, 2017)(Rao, 2019). In Indonesia, English is primarily regarded as a foreign language, and it is rarely used in everyday communication. This prominence of English has influenced the status of the English subject in curriculum, for example the status of the English subject at the primary school level. English is regarded as one of the most hard and toughest languages to learn. Lack of English exposure is one impeding factor in attaining English among ESL or EFL students (Sikki et al., 2013) (Halik & Nusrath, 2020). Then, students with lower English proficiency level tend to have negative attitudes towards English language learning. Hence, it is difficult for English language teachers to teach English in English as

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second language (ESL) and English as foreign language (EFL) context to the students (Jalaluddin & Jazadi, 2020; Mollaei & Riasati, 2013). Apart from the forementioned issues, there are myriad obstacles and difficulties to be taken into consideration for English language teacher when teaching English in ESL or EFL contexts.

The teaching of English to young learners brings with it its own variety of issues. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), a lack of training and professional development for teachers is one of the difficulties that can arise when teaching English to young students (Copland et al., 2014; Mijena, 2014; Prihatin et al., 2021). Additionally, as a result of this difficulty, there may be a shortage of teachers who are knowledgeable and skilled. Unmastery on the part of teachers of teaching methods, strategies, and techniques is yet another problem that has surfaced as a direct result of inadequate training and professional development for educators. Another problem that arises while teaching English to younger students in an EFL setting is a scarcity of resources and instructional material (Listyariani et al., 2018; Saleh & Ahmed, 2019). The lack of learning activities is therefore caused by the emergence of monotonous activities (ibid). Challenges associated with maintaining order in the classroom (Pertiwi et al., 2020; Ramadhani & Syamsul, 2017). In addition, a lack of exposure to the English language is another obstacle confronted while teaching English to young students (Chowdhury & Shaila, 2011; Mijena, 2014; Nikmah, 2018).

There are myriad of empirical studies that have tried to examine the issues in teaching English to young learners in general or local context (Camlibel-Acar, 2016; Copland et al., 2014; Listyariani et al., 2018; Mijena, 2014; Pertiwi et al., 2020; Prihatin et al., 2021). (Camlibel-Acar, 2016; Copland & Garton, 2014; Listyariani et al., 2018) Lack of qualified English teachers can be considered as one of the impeding factors in teaching English for young learners (TEYL) and it is caused by inadequate professional training development for teachers. With this condition, it is difficult for English teachers to teach English subjects, determine an appropriate teaching approach in the class (Pertiwi et al., 2020; Prihatin et al., 2021). Then, lack of learning resources also seems to be one of the issues that have been faced by the teachers in TEYL context. Insufficiency of English exposure in the learning process can be considered a hurdle that can be faced in TEYL especially in teaching English in foreign language context (Mijena, 2014). Furthermore, big class size can be seen as another problem in TEYL context because teachers will have difficulties in managing the classroom (Jazuli & Indrayani, 2018; Ratminingsih et al., 2018). While lack of motivation and discipline issues are the issues in TEYL context that emerge from students' side.

In addition, the teaching and learning of English in rural settings might be impeded by substantial hurdles. Some main issues that can be faced during the English teaching and learning process in rural setting such as, insufficient educational facilities students' negative perceptions regarding English language learning, lack of parental support and their socioeconomic background (Febriana et al., 2018; Ler, 2012; Shan & Abdul Aziz, 2022). Then limited learning sources can be one of obstacles in teaching English in rural setting. All of these limitations and obstacles have made it tough and challenging for English Language teachers to teach English to pupils in rural areas. However, small number of research has investigated the issues and challenges of TEYL in rural areas. Study conducted by previous study in Bangladesh examined the hurdles in TEYL at the Primary level of rural area in Bangladesh (Milon, 2014). Previous study found the majority of students in rural schools are weak in English cause their low proficiency level, scarcity of professional English teachers, lack of teachers professional training development, lack of mastery of methods and materials of teaching English, limited time allocation, classroom size, lack of pedagogical knowledge (Halik & Nusrath, 2020; Matenda et al., 2020).

Then previous study intended to investigate the barrier rural Malaysian preschool instructors have in teaching and mastering English abilities (Masturi et al., 2022). This study discovered that lack of English exposure, classroom management and lack of mastery teaching method and strategies, low level of English skills, and lack of parental relation can be identified as a challenge in teaching English at preschool level. Furthermore, other researcher discovered a number of factors that impede English language instruction in rural areas, including inadequate parental involvement, an inadequate educational materials in schools, both students' and parents' negative attitude toward English learning, a lack of motivation and proper instruction, a lack of enthusiasm in learning English, a poor learning atmosphere, a poor social background, and a lower level of basic English knowledge (Halik & Nusrath, 2020). Previous research also looked at the difficulties faced by generalist teachers of English in rural Mexican schools (Izquierdo et al., 2021). This study discovered that generalist teachers experience challenges as a result of lack professionalization of the English language, which affects their ability to teach students in the language.

There are few studies that have been examined teaching challenges in Indonesian rural area. The study by previous study examined into challenges faced by English teachers in remote areas (Harlina & Nur Yusuf, 2020). This study revealed that low student motivation in learning the English language, a lack of parental support, and poor teacher quality are some of the factors that make it difficult to teach English in

rural areas. While other study investigated on difficulties with online teaching in rural areas during the Covid-19 outbreak (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020). According to this study, English teachers in rural areas face challenges such as a lack of learning facilities, a lack of student motivation, a lack of parental supervision, and insufficient teacher training while attempting to teach English online.

However, scarce research has investigated challenges in teaching English for young learners in rural in rural area. Previous study investigated difficulties toward teaching English in rustic areas in Baureno, East Jave, Indonesia (Khulel & Wibowo, 2021). Then, this study discovered 3 emerging challenges that elementary teachers confronted. First, Socio-economic condition. This condition emerged due to socio-economic factors for instance parentals' income, background of education, and occupation. This condition had been influencing on students' motivation in learning English. Another study conducted, Indonesia who depicted that sociocultural issues, students' lack of prior knowledge, students' lack of enthusiasm, schools' lack of resources, and teachers' lack of training on their professionalism were identified as the challenges teachers in rural settings face when attempting to teach English (Syahputra, 2022).

Based on those problem and descriptions from previous empirical research, it showed that there was scarce studies have investigated the challenges in teaching young learners in Indonesian rural area. Furthermore, such studies in investigating challenges in teaching young learner in Indonesian context are still necessary. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the challenges of teaching English to young learners in rural area of Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia.

#### 2. METHOD

In attempt to answer the research objective, this study employed qualitative research methodology. By implementing qualitative research, it provided in-depth understanding of real-world issues by taking into consideration the natural contexts in which individuals or groups function (Haven et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Furthermore, case study as part of qualitative research methodology was adopted as a research design in this study. The implementation of case study assisted in providing indept information about the phenomenon in this study (Frees & Klugman, 2013; Yin, 2018). This research conducted in several Elementary schools in rural area in Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The researcher decided to conduct this study in Elementary schools since the focuses of this study is to investigate the challenges that emerge of teaching English for young learners in rural area. Furthermore, three elementary English teachers in rural area became the participants of this study since the focus of this study is to examine the issues that teachers face of teaching English in Elementary schools at rural area. Furthermore, purposive sampling was utilized to select the participants and there were some criteria, which were: 1. The participants are elementary English teachers in rural areas. 2. The participants have minimal 1 year teaching experience. Table 1 presented demographic information about the participant.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Information

No.	<b>Initial Name</b>	School	<b>Educational Background</b>	Teaching Experience (Year)
1	Participant 1	Elementary school A	Mathematic Education	2
2	Participant 2	Elementary school B	English Education	1
3	Participant 3	Elementary school C	English Education	1

Semi structured interview was used as data collection instrument in this study. The participant asked to share their experiences in teaching English for young learners in rural area through semistructured interview. The interview took around 10-15 minutes for each participant and the participants could use either English or Bahasa Indonesia. Also, all the interview processes were documented in form of audio format. There 2 primary questions that raised to the participants were as follows: Regarding participant demographic data, the first inquiry. The second concern was the difficulty of teaching young learner in Indonesian rural areas. Also, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used to validate the qualitative data (Moon et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004). The credibility was achieved through regular debriefing between the researchers and supervisors. Then, transferability was attained through providing clear information related to setting and subject of the data. Also, to strengthen dependability this study, all interview processes were documented. In addition, confirmability was achieved through the returning process of the transcripts of the interview of the research subjects for confirmation before being forwarded to the translation process. Then, the results of the interview were transcribed, observed, labelled, organized based on theme and further analysed. Furthermore, thematic analysis was utilized to analyse the collected data, where emerging theme would be identified, categorized, and discussed.

#### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

The status of English in Curriculum

This study identified the position of English in curriculum one of difficulties that confronted by English teachers in rural area. As pointed by Participant 1 that the fact that "English has become a local content lesson and is no longer the primary subject that must be taught to elementary school students is, in my opinion, a setback and lack of attention from educational administrator. Considering that English is crucial for children's future access to richer knowledge and exploration of a larger universe. Obviously, pupils must begin learning English at a young age, given that they are in primary school." (Participant 1)

One of the participants, participant 1, held the view that the status of English as a local subject is a setback, as it causes some schools to pay less attention to it. Also, according to Participant 2, the fact that "English is now considered a local content subject has influenced the amount of time that is allocated to the study of the English language. Even though English has local content status and teaching is scheduled once a week, in practice, sometimes I teach English once every 2 weeks or 3 weeks. Because there are some local contents being taught, sometimes I change the English subject for other material." (Participant 2)

The status of English as a local content subject in the curriculum, particularly at the basic level, has been impacted by changes in educational policy. Additionally, it has impacted the time allotted for English language instruction, which the participants perceive as a drawback since they believe it is insufficient for the process of teaching and learning English. Additionally, the participants believed that learning English is crucial for children's future success in accessing more in-depth knowledge and global exploration.

## Lack of Qualified English Teachers

Other issues confronted by English teachers when teaching English in rural area related with lack of certified English teachers. As stated by Participant 1, that "When teaching English to students, I usually explain the material first and then after that I give them assignments such as ask them to do the worksheets. However, I have difficulties in choosing the appropriate strategies when it comes to teach English skills to the students. This difficulty occurs because I do not come from English education background, therefore it is quite difficult to teach English skills especially since there is no English training for teacher like me." (Participant 1)

Thus, the lack of proficiency English teachers in rural schools is one of the issues associated with the teaching and learning English. Therefore, it is found that English teachers are teachers who lack a foundational English education as stated by Participant 1. This makes it harder for the teacher to teach English, particularly English skills.

# Insufficient Educational Facilities

Sufficient educational facilities are important to support the learning process. H However, some rural schools suffer from inadequate facilities. As noted by Participant 1 "so it's very rare for me to implement such technology or other resources to support the English teaching and learning process. Besides that, if we want to use such as an LCD, we have to borrow it first at the village office, because the school's property is in poor condition and no longer can be used." (Participant 1)

The school has facilities, but they were in poor condition, as indicated by Participant 1's statement. Similarly, Participant 2 also confronted the similar issue related with inaccessibility of the internet. "Inaccessibility to the internet is one of the obstacles associated with teaching English in distant areas. This makes it tough for me to access the numerous types of intriguing teaching and learning resources that are only available online." (Participant 2) It shows that in rural areas there are not enough educational facilities available to support the teaching and learning process of the English language such as the use of internet to access learning resources that are only available online. Due to the lack of not enough educational facilities.

# Students' Negative Attitude in English Language learning

Students' negative attitude toward English language also found as issue in teaching English in rural area. Participant 1 pointed out that "Due to infrequent exposure, students are still unfamiliar with the English language. Therefore, students continue to feel that English is a challenging language that is unnecessary to acquire." (Participant 1)

Similarly, Participant 2 pointed out that "Actually, there is no substantial difference between the learning materials provided in villages and cities from a standpoint of instructional materials. However, there is a distinction between how English is received and how it is learned. I do not wish to generalize as an English teacher in the village. This viewpoint is solely from my perspective as a teacher at our school toward the students I teach. There is a perception that English is difficult in rural places, which is sufficient to reduce their enthusiasm to study." (Participant 2). Participant 1 and Participant 2's statements indicated

that students' negative attitudes toward the English language stemming from a lack of exposure to the language and their attitude demotivated them to study English.

Students' Socio-Economic Background

Students' socio-economic background also found as challenges in teaching English in rural area. As noted by Participant 2 which is "In rural areas, the majority of students come from socioeconomic backgrounds that are lower, meaning that their parents are less likely to understand the necessity of learning English. This belief is affected to some extent by the low educational background of the parents." (Participant 2)

Similarly, Participant 3 noted that "The socioeconomic background of student has a significant impact on their English-learning abilities. I observe that parents from the medium and upper classes realize the significance of English more and are also sufficient from an economic standpoint. For example, paying for an English tutor for their children. Meanwhile, this is opposed by the fact that some parents from lower socioeconomic classes are unaware of the significance of English and are less able to fund their children's education." In rural areas, the majority of students come from socioeconomic backgrounds that are lower, meaning that their parents are less likely to understand the necessity of learning English. Meanwhile, some parents from lower socioeconomic classes are unaware of the significance of English and are less able to fund their children's education.

#### Discussion

English is still considered a sort of local content in several Indonesian primary schools. According to the findings of this study, the status of English as local content has brought about problems with time management. Participant 1 held the view that the time allotted for teaching the English topic, which is  $2 \times 30$  minutes each per week, is insufficient due to the fact that elementary students will be unable to recall the information that they learned in the prior meeting. As a consequence of this, teachers have to spend the upcoming week going over previous content, which can take a significant amount of time.

Based on the data, it found that as local content subject, the status of English can cause problem in time management. This is in line with finding that one of the challenges that confronted by English language teachers when teaching English in primary level the time management issues emerged and it can be influenced with the status of English subject in curriculum (Khulel & Wibowo, 2021). As a result, English has received minimal consideration from teachers.

It was discovered that one of the most significant obstacles to teaching English in rural areas is the incapability to utilize appropriate teaching techniques, methods, or approaches when teaching English to students in rural area, which is responsible for the inadequate English language proficiency of rural students. Furthermore, this finding in line with findings that lack of experienced teachers became one of issues in teaching English for young learners in rural area (Harlina & Nur Yusuf, 2020; Milon, 2014). Also, this finding supported finding that in rural areas, a shortage of English-proficient teachers can significantly contribute to incapability to utilize appropriate teaching techniques, methods, or approaches (Izquierdo et al., 2021). Also, inadequate professional development for teachers also affects teachers' proficiency in teaching English. Then, it is tough and challenging to teach English to rural children without knowledge and skills related lesson planning and teaching approaches, especially in regard to teaching the four English Language skills (Fawley et al., 2020; Ogunjobi & Akindutire, 2020).

In remote areas, a lack of educational facilities can be one of the obstacles to teaching English. In this study discovered that the absence of facilities to enhance the learning process was one of the obstacles rural English teachers encountered. In addition, this is in the same vein with the findings which found that some rural schools have access to basic facilities and equipment but are unable to fully utilize the facilities due to the difficulty of obtaining the facilities (Mahdum et al., 2019; Zaenafi, 2019). Also, inadequate educational infrastructure is one of the primary obstacles that can be encountered throughout the English teaching and learning process in rural setting and this is supported finding which insufficient educational facilities can be one of obstacle in teaching English in rural area (Febriana et al., 2018). Besides that, it is reported that many facilities and equipment in rural schools have become obsolete, which this finding in the same vein with other study in rural setting some of facilities become defunct (Matenda et al., 2020). Then, the lack of internet access can be identified as a hurdle in teaching and learning in rural area. Also, this might be one of the enormous challenges faced by English Language teachers in remote areas, as it can be difficult to gain access to a variety of engaging teaching and learning materials and this is in the same vein with finding which One of the challenges of teaching in rural regions is the absence of internet access (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Sabiri, 2019).

Another difficulty that found in this study is that TEYL teachers in rural Indonesian schools encountered is dealing with students who have a negative attitude regard the English language. For students

in rural Indonesian schools, a lack of enthusiasm in learning English presents a challenge for their teachers, who must overcome this impediment in order to give lessons that are easily understood by their students. It indicated that students' attitudes toward English language learning have influenced their motivation to learn English. Thus, it is evident that their unfavourable attitude toward English language study can lower students' motivation, and this can be interpreted as a challenge for English teachers in rural areas (Halik & Nusrath, 2020; Harlina & Nur Yusuf, 2020). In addition, these are in line with previous study who discovered students' negative attitudes is one of primary obstacles that can be encountered throughout the English teaching and learning process in rural settings (Halik & Nusrath, 2020).

Furthermore, lack of exposure to English can be influencing factor on students' negative attitudes toward English learning. Then this is supported some empirical studies' finding of previous study that inadequate English exposure during the learning process might be regarded as a potential obstacle in teaching English to young learners particularly in teaching English in a foreign language situation (Mijena, 2014; Nikmah, 2018). Whereas in rural locations, it can be difficult to get information or entertainment linked to the English language, and there is also a limited amount of English environment. Moreover, students' socio-economic background also plays role in impeding the teaching English process in rural setting as found in this study. Based on the data above, it is indicated that the majority of students in rural areas come from low socioeconomic background, preventing them from receiving adequate educational resources. Students who come from more fortunate backgrounds have an advantage over those who come from less privileged backgrounds because they have access to more facilities or resources. Because of this, students' socioeconomic backgrounds can have a significant impact not just on their ability to obtain a good education but also on their motivation and attitude toward learning. This aligns with the findings who showed that socio-economic background became one of the problems in teaching English in rural settings (Khulel & Wibowo, 2021). This difficulty occurred as a result of socio-economic background factors such as parental income and educational background.

Based on the result of discussion, it shows that there several challenges in teaching English for young learners in rural setting such as the status of English as local content subject which cause time management problem, lack of qualified English teachers, lack of educational facilities and students' negative attitude toward English teaching and learning. Then, these challenges that faced by the English teachers when teaching in rural area can impede the teaching and learning process. The implication of this study provides valuable information for further research. Also, the finding of this study is expected to provides valuable insight and be helpful for school's stakeholders to increase the quality of the education in English language learning process especially in primary level of education. After reaching a conclusion based on the study's findings, there were certain recommendations that were intended to be given to those who teach English and to other researchers. It is advised that teachers of English, particularly those who teach English to young learners, make use of an appropriate method that might be employed by teachers to overcome the issues of TEYL in rural settings. Then, for other scholars, it is indicated that it is worthwhile to conduct further inquiry in this topic.

# 4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate the challenges of teaching English to young learners in rural area of Semarang Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This study discovered that there are five main challenges that confronted by English teacher in rural area. First, it is the status of English in curriculum which can be a factor that cause time management issue. The second challenges that depicted in this study is lack of qualified English teachers and this issue is affected by the insufficient of teacher professional development. Then, insufficient educational facilities discovered as hurdles that English teacher confronted when teaching English in rural setting. Then, negative attitudes about English caused by a lack of motivation and exposure constitute an additional challenge for rural primary school teachers. In addition, students' socioeconomic background can be indicated as issues in teaching English in rural setting.

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