

# Teaching English in rural area: Challenge and Hope for The future

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to look into the challenges that English teachers face when teaching English in rural junior high schools in Balen, as well as the strategies they use to overcome those challenges. This study used semi-structured interviews and classroom observation to find out the answers. The study's participants were five English teachers from five rural junior high schools in Balen Bojonegoro. The study captured the perspectives of English teachers. The findings revealed seven challenges that English teachers face when teaching English in rural high schools; the curriculum, students' competence, students' motivation, teaching media, an insufficient number of teachers, teachers' development, and parental support were the seven challenges in teaching English. As a result, the English teachers employed four strategies to deal with these challenges. These four teaching strategies included using a variety of teaching methods and techniques, matching students' levels and learning situations, collaborating with schools and parents, and encouraging students' motivation. Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this study will assist English teachers in discovering teaching strategies that are appropriate for the challenges they faced.*

**Keywords:** *English teacher's challenges; Future teaching; Rural area,*

## Introduction

With the increasing cooperation and international exchanges, the popularization of English education has long been a trend. In Indonesia, English is taught and used as a foreign language. At the secondary level, the government has mandated that English is a compulsory subject where students must learn English (Yulia, 2013). Furthermore, Lie (2007) also argues that "the maintenance of English as a foreign language has been steady as it is officially taught throughout the secondary schools". In some parts of Indonesia, English Learning begins in the lower elementary grades and even kindergarten. In urban areas, there is renewed interest in teaching and learning English at home. Therefore, parents should work hard to create an environment for their children to learn English. They have been exposed to

English since childhood. However, English is taught in rural areas of Indonesia for a variety of reasons. Significant challenges in terms of access and quality. As Moulton (2001) explains, a schooling model developed in the urban context is not continually relevant to a rural setting. There are many factors that influence the quality of English teaching in rural areas. Luschei & Zubaidah (2012) states that "the greatest educational challenge facing Indonesia is the country's vast geography and many remote areas". In addition, Mumary (2017) stated that rural schools have limited access and resources to support their teaching. Meanwhile, urban schools have a good quality of teachers and adequate facilities for teaching and learning. According to Febriana et al (2018), most English teachers in rural schools do not have qualifications in teaching English. For example, English classes are taught by a Physics teacher. The challenges in teaching English are not only from teachers and facilities but also from students and the social environment. Febriana et al. (2018) found that students still have difficulties in speaking Indonesian language. It can be concluded that teachers who cannot speak the local language of students may need extra efforts in teaching English. Sulistiyo (2016) also states that rural communities regard formal education as being unimportant. Parents do not encourage much motivation to their children to study hard. Geography, teacher quality and other factors, Resources, facilities and social issues can make differences in English Quality of teaching received by students in urban and rural areas. Some researchers have addressed issues related to teaching challenges Rural English is mainly at the primary stage. Although little research Learn about the challenges and hopes of teaching English to rural youth Indonesian high school. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to The Challenges Faced by English Teachers in Rural Senior High Schools and the Teacher's Mental Journey deal with them. Research on the challenges and hopes of English language teachers has never been done. This study aims to shed light on the challenges associated with English teachers faced in rural areas, how do they overcome the challenge of improving the quality of English language teaching, especially in secondary schools in rural areas.

### **English Language Teaching in EFL Context**

As explained earlier, English is a foreign language in Indonesia. Oxford and Shearin (1994), a foreign language is a language learned only during formal education. In other words, the students may have limited opportunities to get language input outside the classroom because the community does not use the language as a communication tool in their daily lives. However, English teaching practices in Indonesia are often reflective Native speaker norms. Most teachers believe that if students face the target culture in language classes. So they are Ambitiously use target language materials to teach English. According to Derakhshan (2015), a teacher must understand what, how and why such learning affects students. ELT practices in Indonesia specifically and other expanding countries generally need to be revisited because English education practice tends to have unrealistic

expectations about what students can achieve (Jayanti & Norahmi, 2014). They emphasize three contextual factors for the recent revision of ELT practices in EFL countries, especially in Indonesia. First, there are three different roles of English, English as a native language (ENL), English as a second language (ESL), and English as a foreign language (EFL). The role of English in ENL / ESL is generally used as an international communication tool while English in the EFL contexts generally follow the norms used by ENL speakers. However, cultural values information can be included in teaching materials that discuss local content because EFL teaching in Indonesia cannot ignore student multiculturalism in a country with 742 local languages. According to Cortazzi & Jin (as cited in McKay, 2002), the selection of textbooks in non-native countries must include 3 cultural information, namely source culture, target culture, and international target culture. Finally, different cultural values must be incorporated into the English language used to avoid authority and the existence of dominant culture in language. As a result of students' multiculturalism, expectations of being native-like must be excluded from ELT practice in non-native countries. Furthermore, teaching English involves not only the transfer of four language skills, but also the application of appropriate teaching methods and techniques to motivate and entice students about learning and practicing English. Yulia (2013) revealed that although English is an international language, the motivation of students to study English in Indonesia is instrumental because English education in Indonesia is one of the requirements of the national exam. The students do not regard English as an important part in their lives for various reasons such as being up-to-date, education, learning a new skill, having a better job and increased life chances.

### **English Teaching Policy in Indonesia**

The Indonesian Government has mandated that Indonesian schools begin implementing the 2013 Curriculum in the 2013/2014 academic year (Education and Culture Ministerial Regulations No. 81 A, 2013). The Department of Education has made some changes to the standard content in the 2013 Curriculum. One of the changes in the 2013 curriculum is the elimination of English as a subject in primary schools, a reduction in high school teaching hours, and a narrowing of topics. The number of hours spent learning English in the classroom in the 2013 curriculum is less than in the previous curriculum. This creates a significant challenge for both teachers and students to work harder in order to achieve the learning goal in a limited amount of time. The limited hours per week surely reduce the students' chance to learn English and teachers cannot cover all materials in the syllabus (Rahayu, 2016). The government through the Ministry of Education and Culture provides English textbooks for teachers and students. Romero (2007) suggests the use of place-based education that teachers can develop the existing local resources to help students to apply knowledge in real and meaningful contexts. The government has launched e-book for secondary schools, and it requires technology to use it in teaching and learning process.

But, most teachers still have difficulty in using instructional technology which is considered the weakest area to improve, and it should be included in the EFL preservice and in-service training (Alwasiwah, 2013). In addition, the government of Indonesia often changes the curriculum from time to time. It affects the resources used in teaching and learning English, for example old schools still use old printed books that are not relevant to curriculum standards (Febriana et al., 2018).

## METHOD

Since the research question of this study is to describe the challenges and hopes English teachers of High Schools in teaching English in rural areas, this study was conducted in Balen, Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia, utilizing a qualitative descriptive methodology. Balen covers over 42 km<sup>2</sup>. Eight junior high schools are present. This study's focus was on the difficulties and potential outcomes of English teaching at a few rural high schools in Balen. Members of the study, five schools were selected for this study, and five English teachers participated. MTS NEGERI 5 Balen, MTS Islamiyah Balen, MTS Bahrul Ulum, MTS Pembangunan, and MTS plus Miftahul Ulum were the institutions. There is one English teacher each school. Balen junior high schools in rural areas were eligible to participate in this study, which used a purposeful sampling technique. Depending on which schools were in the most remote location, samples of those schools were chosen. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of participants. Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Table 1. Participant of the Research

No	Participants	Educational Background	Length of Teaching	Schools
1	Teacher A	English Education	3 years	Mts plus miftahul ulum
2	Teacher B	English Education	5 years	Mts pembangunan
3	Teacher C	Geography	5 years	Mts negeri 5 Balen
4	Teacher D	Sociology	5 years	Mts Islamiyah Balen
5	Teacher E	English Education	4 years	Mts Bahrul ulum

## Data Collection Instruments

In this study, data were gathered using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. To obtain more detailed information from the participants regarding the difficulties encountered when teaching English in rural high schools, a semi-structured interview was chosen. According to Burns (2000, cited in Hawanti, 2014p. 5), a semi-structured interview “permits greater flexibility and permits a more valid response from the informant’s perception of reality”. Field notes were used to record the English teachers’ answers in the interview. The interview questions were adapted based on the interview questions from Rahayu (2016) and the interview questions were added according to the contexts of this study. Then, observation protocol was used to observe the activity in classroom. Observationsheet helped the observation more organized and structured.

This tool was used to answer the research question about the challenges and hopes used by the teachers in teaching English in rural areas.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The piloting of the study started on November 2022. The purpose of the piloting was to find out if the questions were suitable to get information about teachers' perceptions of English teaching challenges in rural high schools. The real data collection method was through semi-structured interviews consisting of 10 questions. This method was chosen because it allows for spontaneous questions to be asked that come out of the interviewees' responses to get detailed information about the interviewees' perceptions of English teaching challenges in rural areas. For this study, the piloting was conducted by interviewing two English teachers outside the participants. Firstly, interview questions were given to the participants in 10 minutes to give them time to think about the detailed answers to the questions. After conducting the piloting, two participants were interviewed with revised interview questions. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian and recorded for transcription. Then, the other three participants were observed two times considering the time given by the school. The purpose of this observation is to examine the challenges and strategies that were used by the teachers in the classroom. Field notes were used to note something important that will be useful for enriching research findings.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

To present the complete picture of the findings, the data from the interviews was transcribed after all of the data had been collected. Finding themes that arose from the transcript was the next stage. The following phase was categorizing related data that shared a theme. Based on the participants' responses, the results were then examined, evaluated, and descriptively reported.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The research findings and study discussion are presented in this part. Based on the goals of the research, it is divided into two main areas. The difficulties English teachers face when teaching English in rural junior high are discussed in the first section. Balen schools. The second segment expresses optimism for future teaching.

### **The Challenges Faced by English Teachers**

#### **1. The 2013 Curriculum**

The first challenge faced by the English teachers is the 2013 curriculum. When the students start entering Junior High School, English is a new subject for them. English subject is not included as a subject for Elementary School students in the 2013 curriculum that effect

English subject in Junior High school. It becomes a challenge for English teachers because they should teach the students from the basic level of English. Below are two English teachers' responses regarding their views of the challenges in teaching English as a new subject to students.

**Teacher A:** *“At the beginning of teaching, the main challenge is the first time the child learns English, and we teach the basic introduction to English, namely numbers, nouns and verbs in teaching at MTS.”*

**Teacher C:** *“for schools in rural areas, especially in elementary schools there is no English subject, which makes it difficult for us to introduce English and also the demands of the 2013 curriculum..”*

It was evident from the interviews that the teachers found it challenging to introduce English as a new topic in junior high schools. The students lacked the fundamental information necessary to understand the lessons. Due to students' lack of foundational English skills, teachers had to start instruction from scratch and create new materials for the 2013 curriculum. The other educators claimed that one of the difficulties in teaching English in rural schools was the 2013 curriculum's strong requirement for English proficiency.

**Teacher B :** *the demands of the curriculum are very high even for children who have no basis for learning English at all..”*

**Teacher D:** *“ the impact of not teaching English in elementary school which teaches about the basics of English such as nouns, verbs and numbers, after going to MTS level they should already have an introduction to English..”*

The difficulties faced by English teachers as they attempted to match the students' aptitude with the requirements of the curriculum. Students at this level should be familiar with the fundamentals of dialogue, as shown in Teacher B. The children struggled because they lacked foundational English skills. Teacher D acknowledged that in order to meet the pupils' level, she frequently used additional sources from the book. The ways to adjust student levels and learning conditions can be done by improving lesson planning (Robert, 2007). The second teacher added inadequate facilities made it challenging for them to produce the material. As a result, they only utilized the resources and facilities that were readily available.

## 2. Students' competence

English is a new subject in junior high schools, as was previously mentioned. Since kids lack an elementary school foundation in English, their proficiency in junior high school is relatively low, particularly in vocabulary. Two English teachers made comments about the students' poor language skills.

**Teacher A:** *“their mastery of English is so low that they don't even know it at all, and we start again from the beginning..”*

**Teacher B:** *“Children's abilities are very diverse, for example from 2 nearby villages out of 10 children in mastering pronunciation there are 3 children who can pronounce fluently, and the rest memorize nouns or meanings..”*

The extracts could be used to draw the conclusion that English teachers had difficulties due to pupils' limited vocabulary. Because vocabulary plays a crucial part in understanding a subject, it hampered the students' knowledge of acquiring fluency in all languages. River in Nunan (1991) argues that vocabulary is one of the knowledge areas in language, is essential for successful second language learning because without vocabulary people cannot use the structure and function in the language. Because they lack vocabulary proficiency, kids are unable to participate fully in class.

### 3. Students' motivation.

The third difficulty that English teachers have has to do with the motivation of their students. The inability of students to show enthusiasm in learning English presents a challenge for English teachers. There are numerous elements that affect pupils' motivation to learn English. Below are the English teachers' responses regarding students' motivation

**Teacher C:** *“in my 5 years of teaching experience, students need some kind of understanding of their future potential in what they need in the future and family problems that do not agree with foreign culture.”*

Due to their limited family background and lack of global understanding, the majority of junior high school pupils in rural locations did not perceive English as an important topic, as evidenced by the aforementioned interviews.. Ho (2003) as cited by Rahayu (2016) also shows that students who are not interested in English may occur in rural areas where students have little contact with foreigners and consequently do not need to learn and communicate in English.

### 4. Teaching media.

According to the findings of the interviews, all teachers agreed that it was crucial for students to be involved or to participate in the international community in order to learn English. In spite of the language's widespread use around the world, rural schools shouldn't be denied access to high-quality English language instruction. Additionally, they emphasized how crucial English is for rural students to succeed in life and keep up with technological advancement. However, they stated that when the 2013 curriculum was implemented, their school's facilities were insufficient to meet the requirements of the curriculum. Two English teachers described the situation as follows,

**Teacher D:** *“In the lesson plan, adequate tools are needed for learning to take place and also in the 2013 curriculum..”*

**Teacher E:** *“sometimes we as teachers have difficulty in developing material and media limitations.”*

According to the aforementioned excerpts, it appears that the availability of English education in rural areas continues to be a barrier for English teachers to meet the demands of the 2013 syllabus. It is quite challenging to execute the K13 curriculum paradigm in the classroom. This is due to the fact that the facilities and learner conditions were insufficient to facilitate the implementation. The facilities at their school, according to all of the English teachers, are insufficient to meet their needs. Most of their instruction and learning took place in poor conditions. One of the schools in this study that were observed had just one book for the teachers. The students had to rewrite the assignments that the teachers had given them in their own books. It becomes a barrier to effective teaching and learning. Additionally, based on the interview, teacher E suggested that the information in the government-provided book was inappropriate for classrooms in rural locations. Additionally, he noted that finding additional references was challenging due to the availability of appropriate resources, which made it extremely tough for him to construct the material. This challenge is basically in line with the general challenge in rural education as reported in the current studies which noted that lack of supplementary teaching materials and facilities is one critical problem in rural education including the realm of ELT (Taneri and Engin-Demir, 2011).

## 5. Inadequate Number of Teachers

The inadequacy of teachers in rural areas is also a challenge for English teachers. From the results of interviews and observations, all teachers taught more than one subject. This is a challenge for them to make effective English lessons. Two teachers admitted that they had no English education background. However, they taught English subject because there were no English teachers in their school. Below are two excerpts from the interview with English teachers.

**Teacher C:** *“enabling teachers who do not have an English background is very likely to be an obstacle.”*

**Teacher D:** *“I myself have no basis for learning English and from the beginning this school was built there was no English teacher at all.”*

Teacher C added that he serves the school in two capacities: as principal and as a teacher. It became a hindrance to concentrating on English-related things. Teacher D added that he did not then submit an application to teach English. He was requested to teach English at the school, though. Due to the incompatibility of the subjects and the teachers' qualifications, these situations had an impact on the courses. This result is basically in line with Hidayah & Marhaeni (2016) research in Ende District, East Nusa Tenggara Province. They reported that some school subjects in the area were taught by those who did not have relevant qualifications due to lack of teachers.



## 6. Teacher Development

The sixth challenge is about the shortage of trainings. Two teachers had no English background and they mentioned that teacher training was a dire need. While teacher dissatisfaction with himself in which he asserted

**Teacher D:** *"It's not enough if we learn to learn English with our limitations, we have to be creative not just smart and it also takes a long time to master it."*

Based on the excerpt above, it was obvious that teachers needed the proper training to build their inventive and creative teaching methods. English teachers may find themselves teaching English without adequate English language training in teaching English to students in particular and such things often occur in poor or rural areas (Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2014). Teachers may be unable to implement good teaching strategies because they may only receive rudimentary training in theory and practical implementation.

## 7. Parents' supports

The last challenge is lack of parents' supports. Parents in rural schools did not consider English language subjects important to their children. The absence of parents' concern for English results in a lack of motivation and support that they provide to their children. Teacher A stated that financial factors influenced parents' supports in providing learning facilities for their children, such as dictionaries. Socio-economic condition in rural areas was still low. Teacher A described on the situation,

**Teacher A:** *"parents' concern in children's education, sometimes there are children who do not bring dictionaries, so they borrow dictionaries from other classes, because their needs are not met."*

Another issue was the lack of correlation between parents and teachers in managing students' education. Teacher D talked about a situation where he had handed homework projects to students to complete at home, but the students had completed them at school beforehand. If the parents of the students monitored and managed their children's at-home learning, according to Teacher D, such incidents wouldn't occur. The above findings are in line with previous Copland, Garton, and Burns (2014) research that students have no idea about the purpose of learning English, "an attitude that can be aggravated by their parents" (p. 747). Tariq et al (2013)'s study which reported one of basic problems faced by rural students is unsupportive attitude of parents about the learning activities in students' home environment. They only provided education for children to school and did not care about the development of children in their education. All teachers in this study agreed that they could not work alone in educating students. They still needed cooperation from parents in helping their children at home.

## The hopes teaching English in the future

Dealing with all those challenges, the teachers hoped that they will also some changes in some areas of education. They hoped that they can be more wealthy in the future so that they can be more creative and innovative in teaching and learning. They also hoped that parents can get in the education so parent and teacher can collaborate to achieve the goal of education.

The youngster must be permanently under the parental thumb in order to perform well in school. On the other hand, in order for the educational activity we are performing with the child to be successful, we need to be aware of a few guidelines related to the child's physical growth, and in addition, a specific emphasis must be placed on the child's psychological development as well.

## CONCLUSION

Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, teaching English is a complex task in the classroom. complex tasks in their teaching. The study highlights various issues English lessons at a rural secondary school in Barun, Bojonegoro, Indonesia. It indicates that teachers were influenced by the 2013 curriculum, student ability, student motivation, and student capacity, student motivation, instructional media, insufficient number of teachers, insufficient teacher development, insufficient number of teachers. There are insufficient teachers, lack of professional development, and lack of parental support. No expectations for teachers. Faculty benefits are a must be improved. Why would Faculty benefits must be improved? Have the impact is profound. On the one hand, under the care of appropriate teachers. Welfare can support Best Teacher Performance. Teacher won't no longer think about how to find a promising teacher to take care of, there will be teaching. A profession that will be popularized from the future future generations, especially those young people with potential and potential included in the premium category. And the existence of these "excellent seeds" is the teacher's will no longer have "forced" people "forced" to become a teacher, but owned by people of really high quality and ability. High quality and ability.

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