



Teaching EFL in a Rural School : Challenges and Strategies

Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Terpencil: Tantangan dan Strategi

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the challenges faced by English teachers in learning English as a foreign language in remote schools and the strategies implemented to overcome these challenges. This research is a case study research using a qualitative approach. This research was carried out at SMPN 06 Malunda from December 2022 to February 2023 and the subjects of this research were all English teachers at SMPN 06 Malunda consisting of two (2) English teachers as respondents. Researchers collected data using observation methods and in-depth interviews using interview guides and observation checklists. The data analysis technique used is thematic data analysis, understanding data, composing code, and searching for themes. In addition, researchers used data triangulation to test the validity of the data. The results of the study show that there are several challenges faced by English teachers in teaching EFL in remote schools. These challenges are low student motivation, lack of learning facilities and media, and students who are accustomed to using local languages in the school environment. Then the teacher carried out several strategies to overcome these challenges. The strategy is that the teacher tries to motivate students to learn English, the teacher tries to provide facilities and media to support the learning process and accustom students to using Indonesian and limits the use of regional languages in the school environment.

Keywords: remote schools, learning challenges, and strategies for overcoming challenges

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas tentang tantangan-tantangan yang di hadapi guru bahasa inggris pada pembelajaran bahasa inggris sebagai bahasa asing di sekolah terpencil dan strategi yang di lakukan untuk mengatasi tantangan-tantangan tersebut. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian studi kasus dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Penelitian ini di laksanakan di SMPN 06 Malunda pada bulan Desember 2022 sampai dengan Februari 2023 dan adapun yang menjadi subjek pada penelitian ini adalah semua guru bahasa inggris yang ada di SMPN 06 Malunda yang terdiri dua (2) guru bahasa inggris sebagai respondent. Peneliti mengumpulkan data menggunakan metode observasi dan wawancara mendalam dengan menggunakan interview guide dan observation cheklist. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah tematik analisis data, understanding data, composing code, and searching fot the themes. Selain itu, peneliti menggunakan triangulasi data untuk menguji keabsahan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada beberapa tantangan yang di hadapi guru bahasa inggris pada pembelajaran EFL di sekolah terpencil. Tantangan tersebut adalah rendahnya motivasi siswa, kurangnya fasilitas dan media pembelajaran dan siswa yang terbiasa menggunakan bahasa daerah di lingkungan sekolah. Kemudian guru melakukan beberapa strategi untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut. Strategi tersebut adalah guru berusaha memotivasi siswa untuk belajar bahasa inggris, guru berusaha menyediakan fasilitas dan media untuk mendukung proses pembelajaran dan membiasakan siswa untuk menggunakan bahasa Indonesia serta membatasi penggunaan bahasa daerah di lingkungan sekolah.

Kata kunci : sekolah terpencil, tantangan pembelajaran, dan strategi dalam mengatasi tantangan

1. BACKGROUND

Education is one of the government's programs that is held sustainably. This agenda focuses on the use of human resources because human resources are the key to the success of nation-building. Education is an effort to improve human resources and it can be seen from the government's desire to improve and fulfill the equipment in related components, including teaching foreign languages such as English. English is one of the most important subjects for every student. English has become a compulsory subject at all levels of education in Indonesia which is learned from elementary schools until to college. According to Lie (2007), the maintenance of English as a foreign language has been steady because it is officially taught at all school levels. He also said that there is a tendency in several big cities to teach English from the lower grades of elementary school to the advanced level. Today English has a very important role, English has become an international language and it is become the most widely used language in almost all countries, including Indonesia, because the fact that English is one of the international languages that has been recognized by the Indonesian government and the goal is that students can be equipped with mastery of English in the current era of globalization (Rahmajanti 2008). In addition, English is also the main language in several fields such as in the fields of politics, economics, technology, and education. For example, in the field of education, English is used to understand books and educational references from European and American countries, for example. Besides that, English is also used in the field of technology, for example, it is used to understand every product that comes from abroad. The explanation above becomes the reason for the importance of learning English and requires students to be equipped with mastery of English as the ability to compete and get better job opportunities. According to Grystal (1997), English is needed in almost all aspects of life such as education, work, business, and others. English in Indonesia is a foreign language and especially in rural areas, English is only learned at school and only learned in formal learning so learning English in remote areas often experiences and faces challenges. According to Khan (2021), teaching English becomes a crucial issue when it is taught as a foreign language. Teaching English as a foreign language is an uphill task when it comes to places where English has limited exposure. English is only used a little in the daily environment, for example, in interactions with families and the environment with friends only uses

the mother tongue and Bahasa and very rarely uses English. This shows that learning English as a minority language and foreign language is very difficult to obtain and learn so the success and failure of students in learning English are strongly influenced by the learning process at school and student activities and the role of the teacher in the learning process.

Based on the previous observations, it was found that teaching English in schools often faced various of challenges. The challenges were experienced by teachers and experienced by students, especially learning English in rural schools. Learning English in rural schools has a higher level of challenges than in schools in urban areas. Such as the lack of media and learning references. For example, with limited internet network access, it becomes a problem for English teachers who teach in rural schools because they will find the difficulty to get references and learning resources that can support learning to be better such as books, journals, and learning videos. Besides that, English as a foreign language has certainly become a difficult subject for students to understand because in rural schools, English is a new thing for students and it is only introduced in the school environment. The schools in rural areas also have their own challenges where almost all students are still accustomed to using their traditional languages even in the school area and in the classroom, so teachers must be able to build good communication in regional languages and use Bahasa so that the learning process can run well, besides that the lack of awareness of students about the importance of learning English so students are not too interested in learning English, so teachers have to be able to motivate students to learn English. This is a challenge faced by English teachers in the teaching and learning process in rural schools.

This becomes a big responsible for English teachers who teach in rural schools, as we know that teachers are educational staff who are responsible for implementing the teaching and learning process and play an important role in the learning process so teachers are required to be more creative and innovative in transferring knowledge. In addition, teachers must also be able to position themselves as motivators and facilitators for students and must be able to adapt to the conditions of students and their environment and habits so that the learning process run as well as we expect.

The school that becomes the object of this research was located in a rural area where there are not many media and learning resources that support learning English. Besides that, the condition of students at the school does not give good attention to learning English. The researcher conducted the research on SMPN 06 Malunda, the school that was the object of this research. It is one of the schools located in Ulumanda, Majene regency, West Sulawesi, this school is precisely in Tandeallo Village which is one of the most remote villages in Ulumanda district. In this school learning English is not an easy thing, based on previous observation there are many problems faced by English teachers, including the limitations of learning facilities and infrastructure, such as lack of internet access so that students cannot access learning media that can support the learning process such as books, journals, and learning videos. Besides that, most of the students in the school still communicate by using the local language. They are familiar with their local language even in the learning process in class. This is certainly a challenge for English teachers who teach at the school. The next challenges, the teacher has to try to find good opportunities to motivate students to be actively involved in the learning process in class, especially in learning English. Students at the school are not interested in English lessons and do not pay attention to any material taught by the teacher due to their unawareness of the importance of learning English, as well as family and community environments that do not provide full support to their children in education.

Based on the description of the background above, the researcher was motivated to conduct research entitled " **Teaching EFL in Rural Schools : Challenges and Strategies** ". The research analyzed and described the challenges faced by English teachers in teaching in rural schools, and the strategies that were used to overcome these challenges, and also this research was considered to be able to fill the gap and solve the challenges especially in teaching English of previous studies.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1 Definition of Challenges

Challenges are things and objects that need to be overcome so that they inspire determination to improve problem-solving abilities. This is a stimulus to be able to work harder and try to provide solutions

because challenges will only be resolved with courage and strong determination in everyone. According to Collins Dictionary (2008), a challenge is something that requires great effort and determination.

According to Mashingaidze (2022) challenges are the problems and difficulties faced by a person then require great effort, energy, and skills to overcome and solve these problems. successfully. Then what is the nature of the results of completing the challenge?, if someone successfully completes the challenge he will be said to have achieved a victory and someone who has completed the challenge is said to have achieved success. However, it should be understood that the completion of challenges can be adjusted to each individual's abilities.

Therefore, based on several previous definitions, we can conclude that the challenges are anything that needs to be completed that requires intention, determination, and great effort to complete.

2.2 Challenges in Teaching

In the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language, Indonesia is often faced with several challenges. These challenges can occur with students and teachers. Based on previous observations, it has been found that there are several challenges faced by English teachers in the teaching and learning process. Hamalik (2013) said that in the teaching and learning process, there are two dimensions, namely the component dimensions and the interaction between components. These components are teachers, students, lesson planning, learning media, learning approaches, and learning evaluation. The components above are an important part of the learning process and have an interrelated relationship with one another. Therefore, if one of the components is not fulfilled, it will cause a new challenge in the learning process.

2.3 Definition of Strategy

Firstly, the term strategy was used in the military field, namely an accurate form of attack to get the victory. According to Tjiptono (2006), strategy can be interpreted as planning for the distribution of military power in certain areas to achieve goals, and based on several definitions of strategy according to the meaning of the language used, it can be concluded that strategy is long-term planning that is prepared with the aim to reach a target. Beside that, according to Hamel and Prahalad (2002) strategy is a tool to achieve goals

related to long-term goals, follow-up programs, and priority allocation of resources. Strategy as an activity to provide a unique mix of values to perform an activity differently or perform that differently from its rivals. McKeown (2011) stated that strategy is about how to shape the future and human efforts to achieve goals and it is also defined as a system or pattern of finding, formulating, and developing doctrines that will ensure short-term and long-term success followed by action and effort.

Based on some of these definitions, the authors concluded that strategy is all forms of planning that we have prepared as well as possible to achieve the targets and goals that we have previously set in the form of approaches or methods.

2.4 Teaching Strategy

In learning there is also what is called teaching strategy, which it is a technique used by teachers and teaching staff in the learning process, each teacher has own strategy that will be used in the learning process according to the topic that will be taught. The strategy is usually adjusted to the level of student expertise, and the stage of student learning.

According to Kozma (2021), learning strategies can be interpreted as something that is chosen that can provide facilities and assistance to students so that learning objectives can be achieved. Then, Vienne (2007), said that learning strategy is a measure by educators and students in realizing learning goals. In the world of education, strategy is defined as a way and method in learning activities to achieve learning objectives, namely planning that contains a series of activities. According to Haidir and Salim (2012), teaching strategies include approaches, methods, media selection in the learning process, measuring student progress, and student grouping.

Based on the previous explanation we can conclude that strategies in the learning process are all forms of planning and actions in the learning process that are arranged as well as possible to create a good learning atmosphere and target. In addition, strategies in learning are also used to provide solutions to challenges and problems which are faced by teachers and students.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Type of Research

This study used a qualitative method. The qualitative method is a research method that is used to find out and explain phenomena in depth by collecting data and requires a deep understanding related to the object of research. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in written form and oral form from a person and the observed behavior. According to Creswell (2012) qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding individual and social human problems that begins with assumptions and the study of research problems that examines how a person and individuals interpret social problems. Besides that, according to Mukhtar (2013), a qualitative research method is a method used by a researcher to find out the knowledge or theories about research at a certain time.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is all of the processes in planning and implementing research. According to Willig (2001), a good qualitative research design is a design with data analysis methods in the form of planning and design in accordance with the research question, and where the data collection method can produce data and information in accordance with the data analysis method used. The research design used in this study was a case study. According to Yin (2002) case studies are empirical investigations that investigate a case, problem, and phenomenon in a real-life context. Creswell (2014) Case study is a research strategy to thoroughly investigate a problem by gathering complete information using various data collection procedures. Case studies are conducted to gain in-depth understanding and more intensive analysis of individuals, groups and situations. In addition, Azwar (2015) states that the case study research is aimed at obtaining complete information on the subject being studied with the scope of the research covering all or certain aspects.

3.3 Research Instrument

The research instruments are the tools that used by researcher to collect and to produce data that is expected in the form of empirical data. The research instruments was set according to the research method used or data collection techniques. Takona (2002) describes research instruments as important tools for measuring variables such as perspectives, attitudes, concepts, ideas, and composition. Researchers can

make observations, questionnaires, and interviews as effective tools when conducting research in the field of education. In this research, the researcher was involved directly in the process of data collection, and the researcher act as an observer and interviewer. In the observation and interview section researcher used the observation chek list and interview guide as research instruments for data collection in this study. An observation check list is an observation guide that contains points that become the target of what is being observed. An observation checklist is used when the researcher wants to make observations. While, the interview guide is an interview sheet that contains a list of several questions which the researcher uses to conduct interviews by asking these questions to respondents.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is processing, separating, and grouping several collected data to become structured and systematic scientific information and then becomes a research report. In qualitative research, the process of data analysis will carry out at the time of data collection within a certain period of time. When the interview is conducted, the researcher will analyze the data from the respondent's answers and if the answers obtained are not satisfactory the researcher will continue to ask another question to get information and data that are considered credible.

Data was collected through observations and interviews then it was analyzed systematically. In data processing, the researcher carried out several steps and stages including the collection of all data and events regarding the object which was being studied. Then the data that has been collected was classified into certain parts according to the problem that was being studied. Researcher analyzed carefully and thoroughly. The data analysis aimed to get some conclusions and statements from the problems that have been studied. On this study interview data analyzed by using tematic analyzing.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings

This research was carried out at SMPN 06 Malunda in Tandeallo village, Ulumanda district, Majene Regency West Sulawesi Province. Tandeallo Village is one of the most remote villages in Majene regency, especially in Ulumanda district. Tandeallo Village is approximately

120 km from the urban center of Majene regency and around 30 Km from the axis road Majene-Mamuju. From the axis road, we have to pass through the concrete and uncover roads to get to the village of Tandeallo. Apart from that, we also have to climb mountains, pass through dense forests and local people's plantations to reach the villages. In the village of Tandeallo, there is no adequate network access, the people there only use a makeshift wifi connection and PLN electricity has only been coming to the village of Tandeallo since 2020.

SMPN 06 Malunda is located in Taukong Hamlet, Tandeallo Village, which is about 1-2 Km from the village, so students at the school have to walk a distance to get to school and most students at the school still go to school on foot.

In this study, the researcher collected data by conducting field observations and interviews with all English teachers at SMPN 06 Malunda. The respondents consisted of two teachers. They are Mrs. RS and SH. They are English teachers who were appointed as ASN and placed at SMPN 06 Malunda a few years ago. Based on the results of the research and the data collected, namely observation and interviews with respondents, it was found that there were several challenges in the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) at SMPN 06 Malunda. These challenges are:

- 1) Lack of learning facilities and media

Based on observations and interviews by researchers in the English teaching process at SMPN 06 Malunda, which is a rural school, several challenges faced by English teachers have been found. One of them is the lack of school facilities and learning media. Those are the lack of English dictionaries, journals, and English books. This certainly gave difficulties to the teachers and students in the learning process, especially when they wanted to translate the words and texts that were being studied. Besides that, the limitation of internet access, so that teachers and students were not able to access teaching media such as videos, audio, and pictures that can be used to support the teaching process.

- 2) Low student learning motivation

The next challenge is low student learning motivation, one of the teaching challenges in rural schools is low student motivation in learning

English subjects. The observations and interviews showed that most students in rural schools did not like to join English classes and learn English. They did not pay attention to the material conveyed by the teacher and often they did other activities when teaching was in progress and when the teacher was explaining the material

- 3) Students who are accustomed to using the local language in the school environment

The teachers also faced another challenge, that most students at SMPN 06 Malunda are still accustomed to using the local language. Researchers found that students often use local languages to communicate with teachers and with their friends even outside and inside the classes. This is a challenge faced by English teachers from other regions, who do not understand the local language that students often use at school.

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers, it was found that several strategies were used by English teachers to overcome learning challenges. These strategies are:

- 1) The teachers try to provide references and the lesson media in teaching EFL

One of the challenges for English teachers in rural schools is the limitation of teaching media, namely, the lack of English dictionaries, and English books, and the limitation of internet access so that teachers and students cannot access teaching and learning media. This is required English teachers to be more creative in creating and providing teaching media so that the teaching process runs effectively. The teachers carried out a strategy by making a summary of the basic English materials in the form of papers and then using them to teach. The summary contains words and sentences that are commonly used every day so that students memorize and understand the material more quickly

- 2) The teachers try to motivate the students in learning EFL

Due to the low motivation of students to study English, especially students who are in rural schools, the English teachers at SMPN 06 Malunda applied several strategies to motivate students to be more enthusiastic about learning English. English teachers take an emotional approach so that there is a closeness between students and teachers. This closeness makes students feel more

comfortable learning and not feel reluctant to ask questions if there is a material that is not understood. In addition, the teachers also provide interesting materials so that students are interested in learning English such as objects.

- 3) Teachers limited the using of local Language in the school

In addition, the results of the investigation showed that the students of SMPN 06 Malunda mostly used local languages in the learning classes and when they communicated with teachers and classmates. One of the strategies and efforts carried out by the English teacher to overcome the challenge was consistently using language and English in learning classes and the teachers limited students from using the local language in class. Even though many students were fluent in using language but the teacher told them to learn and use language slowly. Students are taught to ask questions and explain using Bahasa.

4.2. Discussion

This section discusses the analysis of findings and data that has been collected from observations and interviews conducted by researchers. This section consists of two parts based on the research questions in chapter one of this study. First, the researcher will discuss the challenges faced by English teachers in teaching English as a foreign language in a rural school and the second is the strategies used by teachers to overcome these challenges.

Challenges are things and objects that need to be overcome so that they inspire determination to improve problem-solving abilities. This is a stimulus to be able to work harder and try to provide solutions because challenges will only be resolved with courage and strong determination in everyone. According to Collins Dictionary (2008), a challenge is something that requires great effort and determination. This study found that teaching English in schools in remote areas has several challenges.

One of the challenges of education in Indonesia is the problem of facilities and infrastructure. According to KBBi facility is something that is used to achieve goals. According to Mulyasa (2003), educational facilities are equipment and supplies that are directly used and support the educational process, especially teaching and learning processes, such as buildings, classrooms, tables, and chairs, as well as teaching tools and lesson

media such as dictionaries, books, and teaching materials.

Facilities are an indispensable factor in supporting the teaching and learning process because the availability of learning facilities and facilities can make it easier for students to learn better. However in reality there are still many rural areas that have inadequate facilities and infrastructure. The lack of facilities and infrastructure in every school is a very important problem. The lack of facilities and infrastructure makes teaching and learning in schools less than optimal and does not achieve the goals of teaching. As in SMPN 06 Malunda is a rural school that has inadequate learning facilities. Based on the results of the study, SMPN 06 MALUNDA still lacks teaching facilities and infrastructure. Researchers found several challenges in the process of teaching English at SMPN 06 Malunda. One of them is the lack of school facilities. For example, the number of English dictionaries and books is still very limited. This makes the teaching and learning process ineffective and inefficient.

English is currently widely known by students in city schools, but it is different from students which come from rural schools. English in rural areas is not widely known both within the school environment and outside of school (Plessis, 2014). Students who are in rural areas do not know the importance of learning English. The lack of knowledge of English has a big influence on the interest in learning. In addition, the assumption that English is a difficult subject makes them not take great interest in learning English. Many of them do not learn English optimally.

In fact, many students study only for the purpose of answering the national exam. In addition, many students ignore English lessons and make it the next choice of other subjects. Holguín & Morales (2016) said that low interest in learning was seen in student behavior during the learning process in class, such as students not showing enthusiasm during the English learning process.

In this study, it was found that most students did not pay attention to the teacher's explanation properly. They even do other things such as telling stories with classmates during lessons, drawing, joking, and with other friends. Then, when the teacher sought attention by asking about the material presented, most of the students were silent and did not answer.

This reflects that students do not understand the explanations and questions raised by the teacher. In addition, students often leave class during lessons and return to class when the class is over. Students also often do not do the assignments given by the teacher. There were various reasons for them why the teacher did not give them assignments, among these reasons was that students felt they did not understand the assignments given by the teacher so they would not be able to do them. This is in accordance with the results of observations that have been carried out by researchers in the school environment and also interviews that have been conducted with English teachers.

The local language is the mother tongue or the first language in everyday life. According to Parera (1989), a local language is a traditional language in an area that is a hereditary legacy for the community of speakers where the language is used. The use of traditional language in teaching showed a decrease in the use of good and correct Bahasa. Meanwhile, the negative impact of using local languages is that it makes it difficult to use Bahasa and English as we know that Bahasa is the main language for explaining the learning materials, including in English class teaching. This study showed that most students at SMPN 06 Malunda still use the local language in the school environment and also when they communicate with friends and teachers. In addition, based on previous research which was conducted on eighth-grade students of SMPN 10 Magelang, it was known that the use of local languages by teachers to students and students to other students.

5 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions in the previous chapter it can be concluded that there are several challenges in teaching English as a foreign language in rural schools. These challenges are the lack of facilities and infrastructure in schools and the low learning motivation of students and students who are still accustomed to using local languages in the school environment both outside and in the learning class. In addition, the researcher also found several strategies used by English teachers to overcome these challenges so that learning continues to run well. The teachers always try to motivate students in learning English as a foreign language, the teachers always try to provide references and learning media so that learning English

can be more easily understood and learned. The teacher also approaches by building good communication. The goal is that students do not feel reluctant to ask the teacher about the difficulties experienced during the learning process.

sintesis dari poin-poin utama. Untuk sebagian besar makalah penelitian tingkat perguruan tinggi, satu atau dua paragraf yang dikembangkan cukup

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