



CHALLENGE FACED BY E ENGLISH TEACHER IN TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT SMA N 3 GAUNG KAB. INDRAGIRI HILIR

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ABSTRACT

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a subjective category design, aiming to explore the challenges encountered by English teachers in the teaching and learning process at SMA N 3 Gaung, located in Indragiri Hilir Regency. The study specifically investigates the types of challenges faced and the strategies employed by teachers to address them. Data were collected through interviews and the review of existing literature. The interview transcripts function as the primary source of data, while prior studies serve as secondary or supporting sources. The results indicate that the challenges encountered by English teachers can be classified into four major categories. However, interventions have only been implemented for two of these challenges, and even these responses are regarded as temporary solutions, with one being a proposed plan rather than a concrete action. The findings suggest that English teachers confront both internal and external challenges. Nevertheless, this study focuses solely on external obstacles. Moreover, supporting evidence reveals that the issues faced by SMA N 3 Gaung are also present in other schools, implying that these challenges are systemic in nature. Therefore, resolving them requires collaborative efforts involving external parties, such as the local community, regional authorities, and the central government.

Keywords: *Challenges, English Teacher*

TANTANGAN YANG DIHADAPI GURU BAHASA INGGRIS DALAM KEGIATAN BELAJAR MENGAJAR DI SMA N 3 GAUNG KAB. INDRAGIRI HILIR

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan tipe subjective category yang memiliki tujuan untuk mengetahui tantangan yang dihadapi guru bahasa inggris dalam kegiatan belajar mengajar bahasa inggris di SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir. Secara khusus, penelitian ini menjawab pertanyaan penelitian tentang bagaimana tantangan yang dihadapi para guru bahasa inggris dalam kegiatan belajar mengajar bahasa inggris di SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir dan juga upaya guru untuk menghadapi tantangan-tantangan tersebut dalam kegiatan belajar mengajar bahasa inggris di SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir. Sebagai teknik pengumpulan data, penelitian ini menggunakan wawancara dan penelitian sebelumnya. Sebagai data primer, peneliti menggunakan transkrip hasil wawancara sebagai data primer, kemudian penelitian sebelumnya akan digunakan sebagai data pendukung untuk penelitian ini. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tantangan yang dihadapi guru bahasa inggris dalam kegiatan belajar mengajar dibagi menjadi 4 tantangan dan hanya 2 tantangan yang baru mereka berikan upaya untuk menghadapi tantangan yang dihadapi dalam proses belajar mengajar bahasa inggris di SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir. Upaya yang dilakukan dinilai hanya sebagai langkah sementara dan salah satunya berupa perencanaan. Ini menunjukkan terdapat tantangan internal dan eksternal yang dihadapi guru bahasa inggris. Sayangnya, selama penelitian ini hanya mencantumkan tantangan eksternal yang dihadapi para guru bahasa inggris. Dari data pendukung, tantangan yang dihadapi sekolah ini juga dialami oleh sekolah lain. Ini menunjukkan bahwa tantangan yang dihadapi di SMA N 3 Gaung merupakan tantangan yang membutuhkan langkah bersama dengan pihak eksternal sekolah, yaitu masyarakat setempat, pemerintah daerah, dan pemerintah pusat.

Kata Kunci: *Tantangan, guru bahasa inggris*

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INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential language in the modern era. Its importance is evident in how proficiency in English is often considered a key requirement or competency when applying for jobs. English skills are applicable across many areas of life, including business, the professional world, education, and more. According to Hariya Harlina (2020), having English proficiency can significantly enhance one's chances of securing employment opportunities. According to Suhardjono (2022), soft skills include critical thinking, communication, information access and analysis, synthesis, curiosity, creativity, innovation, and leadership. From this perspective, English can be considered a key form of communication used globally and an essential soft skill that supports the development of personal values in each student.

Yuyun (2013) stated that the government has been working to develop a suitable curriculum that aligns with the needs of the Indonesian people. This initiative reflects the government's recognition that English should be taught at all levels of education. Yuyun also noted that teachers receive training programs both before and during the teaching process to ensure high-quality learning. This government action demonstrates that education must evolve in response to the future needs of society.

Hoesny and Darmayanti (2021) emphasized that teaching, once viewed merely as a job, has now become a vital profession at the heart of education. This highlights that the role of a teacher extends beyond simply delivering lessons in the classroom. As teachers take on increasingly diverse responsibilities within the education system, the challenges of becoming a professional educator can emerge from multiple directions. Fadhiliyah, *et al.* (2020) note that some challenges stem from activities and programs that are not well-aligned with the actual needs of teaching and learning.

Gaung Village is one of the remote villages in Riau province, where this village is one of the villages that is precisely located in Indragiri Hilir district and to get to this village requires a journey across the river first. This village only has three state high schools that are located far from each other. Gaung Village is one of the remote villages in Riau province, where this village is one of the villages that is precisely located in Indragiri Hilir district and to get to this village requires a journey across the river first.

This village only has three state high schools that are located far from each other. SMA N 3 Gaung is one of the schools in Gaung Village. This study aims to explore the specific challenges encountered by English teachers in such settings. Therefore, the researcher is interested in examining the challenges faced by English educators at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung.

This Study aims to determine challenges did English teachers face in teaching and learning activities at SMA N 3 Gaung Kab, Indragiri Hilir and determine how did English teachers face their challenges in teaching and learning activities at SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Understanding English Subject as ESL

In Indonesia, the emphasis on English language teaching is still not as widespread as in neighboring countries. As discussed in the journal by Aini and Nohantiya (2020), Singapore has made English its primary language, alongside Malay as the national language. This country recognizes English as a key language for global business leadership. According to Handayani (2016), Indonesia should adopt a perspective similar to that of other countries, positioning English as a more prominent force in fields such as science, economics, politics, technology, and culture. Unlike other nations, Indonesia treats English as a foreign language rather than a second language. This distinction is clearly reflected in the government's policies, which differ from those of countries that consider English an essential part of their national curriculum and global engagement. Several things become challenges for English subject switched to be English Second Language:

1. Challenges in Teaching English Diverse Levels of Student Ability

One of the primary challenges in teaching English is the wide range of student proficiency levels within a single classroom. According to Rifiyanti, *et al.* (2024) in their study titled "Educators' Perceptions of Challenges in Teaching English," this diversity requires a highly flexible teaching approach to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop effectively. This presents a complex challenge for educators, as they must work to ensure that no student is left behind. If students consistently struggle without appropriate support, it can lead to decreased motivation, loss of confidence, and long-term disengagement from learning.



2. Time Constraints

Another significant challenge in teaching English is the limitation of instructional time. Aini and Nohantiya (2020) note that, within the context of Indonesian political policy, English is placed in a relatively weak position. In Merdeka Curriculum, according to Law No. 12 of 2024, Article 33, English at the elementary school level is designated as an elective subject, dependent on the readiness of each educational unit. As outlined in the law's appendix, English instruction is permitted only from grades 3 to 5 with an allocation of 72 instructional hours per year, while grade 6 is limited to 64 hours annually—where one instructional hour equals 35 minutes. At the Senior High School level, English is categorized under vocational subjects, with each level allocated approximately 108 hours per year, and each instructional hour lasting 45 minutes. As Agustin (2015) emphasizes, in the context of language learning, students must be consistently exposed to the target language to build familiarity and fluency. The current government policy, when contrasted with established theories of language acquisition, reveals a significant disconnect. This inconsistency creates confusion for educators and hinders their ability to teach English effectively and in alignment with best pedagogical practices.

3. Resources

According to Supriadi (2015), the presence of teachers or instructional staff plays a crucial role in guiding the learning process, making it more comprehensible, enjoyable, focused, and ultimately more effective for students. He also emphasized that knowledge can originate from various sources and come in different forms. Citing Duffy and Jonassen (1992), Supriadi concluded that learning resources encompass messages, individuals, materials, tools, methods, and environments. It can be concluded that the teacher acts as the primary means through which students access other learning resources to achieve educational goals. This role presents both a challenge and a significant responsibility for teachers—how can they effectively serve as that guiding force for every student if they themselves struggle to access or utilize diverse teaching resources? This raises a critical question: how can teachers lead students toward meaningful learning experiences if they are not adequately equipped or supported to engage with those resources themselves?

2.2 Isolated Regions in the Educational Field

a. Description of Isolated Regions

According to Fadila, *et al.* (2023), isolated regions denote locations where it is notably challenging to access the transportation system and have social, economic, and physical situations that are generally less advanced compared to surrounding regions. According to Fadila, *et al.* (2023), isolated regions denote locations where it is notably challenging to access the transportation system and have social, economic, and physical situations that are generally less advanced compared to surrounding regions.

b. Challenges in Education in Remotes Areas

Based on issue was presented by Ginting (2016), highlighting several challenges in the advancement of education: (1) Inadequate educational resources and infrastructure, (2) Remote geographical locations making access to schools difficult, (3) A limited number of educators with subpar qualifications. Many of these challenges are visible and genuinely occurring issues.

c. Related Studies

According to research conducted by Fadila, *et al.* (2023), titled “Professionalism of Teachers in Remote Areas (A Case Study of SDN 209/III Masgo Jaya)”. The findings reveal that (1) the level of professionalism among educators at SDN 209/III Masgo Jaya is lacking; the teachers there do not possess a clear understanding of the necessary skills and competencies, leading to a learning environment that makes students disinterested and ineffective in their studies. (2) To enhance teacher professionalism at SDN 209/III Masgo Jaya, efforts include reading educational literature to broaden their knowledge base for effective teaching. (3) The challenges hindering the development of teaching professionals at SDN 209/III Masgo Jaya include the challenging accessibility to the school, as the route comprises large rocks, which disrupts efforts to advance teacher professionalism. (4) The lack of sufficient facilities and resources is also an issue.

Based on research by Risnawati, *et al.* (2022), the title “Teachers’ Challenges in Teaching English at Rural Areas”. 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. This research has also found what factors cause challenges faced by teachers. There are, lack of teaching time, students still use their local language, and difficult to accept new things in their environment. Then, the personality of the teacher. Lack of facilities is one of the most factors that cause challenges faced by teachers at MTs Mambaul Ulum and MTs Qaryatul Jihad.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research design with a subject category. So, with this method, this research provides more information about challenges faced by English Teacher in Teaching and Learning activities at SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir. All participants were from SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir Islam. The participants in this research are the Vice Principal of SMA Islam As-Shofa, and 2 persons of English Teacher. This research was conducted with interviews with all participants, collecting another research needed to seek information related to the implementation of the curriculum.

This research is divided into two forms, that is primary data (main) and secondary data (supporting). So, this researcher interviewed all participants one by one and the researcher used guidance interviews so that the information obtained can be focused and not widespread. Then, a record of all interviews will pass member checks after being rewritten by the researcher. Next, in this study, some documents that needed in this research is another research that conducted discuss about challenges faced by English teacher in teaching and Learning activities at Rural Area.

Stage of triangulation in this research, data was obtained from interviews and another research related to the challenges faced by English Teacher in Teaching and Learning activities at SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir. Namely; 1). Main data, classified challenges that faced by English Teacher in Teaching and Learning activities at SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir and the effort that they made for facing that challenges Then, 2). Secondary data, another research that conducted discuss about challenges faced by English Teacher in teaching and learning activities at Rural Area. Further, stage of member check in this research, the data is from the results of interviews with Vice Principal, and also English teachers at SMA N 3 Gaung Kab. Indragiri Hilir. The researcher will conduct a member check by bringing the results of the interview that has been recorded and rewritten by the researcher, then giving it to the informant one by one, and then asking whether there is data that needs to be added, reduced, or rejected by the informants. After an agreement was obtained between the researcher and the informant. Then the researcher will ask the informants to sign it so that the researcher's findings can be trusted and also asevidence that the member check has been carried out by the researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Main Data

a. Lack of Literacy Students

SMA Negeri 3 Gaung faces its own set of challenges in conducting teaching and learning activities, especially in English. The growing importance of English as a vital skill for future survival and competition does not align with the current conditions at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung. One of the main challenges faced by teachers when teaching English is the lack of student motivation and awareness. Similar concerns were also expressed by Rio, an English teacher at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung. As stated by Hasanah, the Vice Principal of SMA Negeri 3 Gaung,

".... Students lack understanding of how important English is for both the present and their future, especially considering that English is now an international language."

Similar concerns were also expressed by Rio, an English teacher at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung. He stated:

"I sincerely hope that students will develop greater enthusiasm in learning English, so that they can use it as a valuable skill to face the increasingly complex challenges of the modern world."

Another English teacher, Daten, also shared his perspective:

"The most noticeable challenge is the lack of enthusiasm or interest from the students. This causes them to become disengaged in class and prevents them from understanding the material, including what has been taught"



in previous lessons."

b. Merdeka Curriculum Policy

Hasanah, the Vice Principal of SMA Negeri 3 Gaung, expressed concerns regarding the limited time allocated for English instruction under the Independent Curriculum. She stated that the current schedule only allows for two hours of English lessons per week, which she believes is insufficient to effectively develop students' English proficiency. She remarked:

"...The bilingual program provided by the Independent Curriculum is only two hours, and that is very insufficient. Therefore, we hold additional bilingual programs at the school."

Furthermore, testimonies from English teachers indicate that the lesson plans (RPP) they implement have already been adapted to comply with the Independent Curriculum policy. However, despite this alignment, they still struggle to enhance students' English skills due to time constraints and additional challenges in the teaching process.

c. Facilities Provided

Daten, another English teacher, gave a slightly more detailed explanation. She acknowledged that while the available facilities are limited, essential tools such as computers and infocus projectors are present.

However, she also pointed out a logistical issue:

"The facilities provided at the school to support the learning process are relatively minimal. There are computers and infocus projectors, but they are only available in certain rooms, so if we want to use them, we have to bring the students to the computer lab."

d. Mother Tongue

In this study, the term *mother tongue* refers to the local or regional language spoken by the students, which is Malay. As a result, English teachers at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung still rely heavily on Indonesian during classroom instruction. This is because students struggle to understand lessons delivered in English. The strong influence of the regional language creates a barrier to English comprehension.

Rio, one of the English teachers, highlighted this issue by stating:

"...The student population at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung is strongly influenced by the use of their mother tongue. Our students are accustomed to speaking in the regional language. Therefore, when I teach English in class, the process becomes more challenging, as students often have difficulty understanding what I am saying."

4.1.2 Effort Made

The vice principal and English teachers at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung have made various efforts within their respective roles to support English language learning. These initiatives aim to help students become more familiar with English, improve their comprehension of the subject matter, and increase their interest in learning the language. Hasanah, the Vice Principal, explained that the school had previously implemented a bilingual program involving both English and Arabic as part of its effort to enhance language education. In addition, she encouraged English teachers to integrate technology into their teaching methods by making use of internet access and smartphones, which are already a part of students' daily routines. She further elaborated:

"...We also encouraged English teachers to make use of available media, such as smartphones and internet access, in order to increase students' interest in learning and improve their understanding of the English language."

Rio, one of the English teachers at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung, has taken several initiatives based on his teaching experience, especially from schools that have previously integrated technology into the learning process. He shared:

"One of the efforts I have made is getting students accustomed to listening exercises by playing conversation recordings that I downloaded from the internet. I play these using basic speakers. My goal is to help students enjoy learning English more."

In addition, Rio has plans to foster a stronger English-speaking environment at the school. He explained:



“I also plan to implement an English Day once a week, where both students and teachers are encouraged to use English throughout the school environment on that specific day.”

Similarly, Daten, another English teacher, has also made efforts to support student learning. She stated:

“I have already implemented a rule in my class requiring students to bring an English dictionary. If they don’t have one, I allow them to use their smartphones instead.”

On certain occasions, Daten also makes use of the available school facilities to enhance the teaching and learning process. In addition to using media, Daten applies group learning strategies for specific topics that are more effectively understood through collaboration. This approach also helps ensure all students receive equal opportunities to comprehend the material. She explained:

“To address these challenges, I often present the material in a way that can be easily understood through group work. I pair students who struggle with those who already understand the content, so their peers can assist them in grasping the lesson.”

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the challenges identified in this study predominantly stem from external factors related to the students. One additional external factor revealed during the research is the shortage of English teachers at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung. This shortage forces the two available English teachers to shoulder a heavy workload, making it difficult for them to achieve instructional goals effectively. Moreover, the school’s limited educational facilities further exacerbate the challenges of teaching English, creating a network of interrelated and increasingly complex issues.

The lack of student literacy is manifested in students’ negative attitudes and misconceptions about the value of English, which hinder the effectiveness of the learning process—especially when compounded by limited instructional time. These attitudes are also shaped by the perceptions held within the students’ surrounding environment, where access to information and awareness of global developments are minimal. This indicates that such challenges cannot be resolved by the school in isolation, as they are deeply influenced by broader socio-geographic and cultural contexts.

The limitations in technology infrastructure extend beyond the school’s capacity to resolve independently. Addressing this issue requires active involvement from local government and village authorities. Small-scale initiatives could serve as starting points, such as fostering effective communication between schools and village officials and encouraging parents to heed the guidance of English teachers to enhance their children’s motivation, particularly in learning English.

The Merdeka Curriculum policy has also had a significant impact on English language education. The government’s decision to reduce English lesson hours and exclude English from the list of compulsory subjects is grounded in clear considerations, notably the shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate facilities prevalent in many remote areas. This situation raises concerns that English learning may be relegated to mere “cramming” practices, a trend that might persist until the 2026/2027 academic year. Meanwhile, the central government, local authorities, and individual schools should proactively prepare strategies to address these challenges.

5.2 Suggestion

To overcome the challenges faced by English teachers at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung, the researcher recommends that teachers actively engage with parents or guardians to raise awareness about the importance of English for their children’s future. Teachers should also communicate the need for improved facilities and infrastructure to support English learning to the school administration. Furthermore, it is advisable for teachers to develop simple and effective learning media for use during lessons and to innovate their teaching methods to better facilitate student learning. Collaboration and discussion among English teachers within the same school or with teachers from other schools can serve as a valuable platform for sharing ideas and enhancing instructional strategies.

Furthermore, it is essential for the school management to recognize the importance of English proficiency for students and to actively support the innovative initiatives proposed by the English teachers. The



school is encouraged to recruit additional English teachers, with a preference for hiring young educators who can contribute collaboratively and introduce new perspectives. Moreover, the school should enhance its facilities by formally submitting requests to government agencies or seeking partnerships with local foundations and private organizations. The researcher hopes that these recommendations will serve as a catalyst for incremental improvements and foster enthusiasm to elevate the English skills of students. at SMA Negeri 3 Gaung, ultimately enabling both teachers and students to overcome the existing challenges effectively.

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