AN INVESTIGATION OF THE TEACHER'S CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH WRITING IN A RURAL AREA

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Abstract

This study explores the various challenges faced by English teachers in teaching writing skills in rural junior high schools in Tanjung Jabung Timur and the strategies they employ to overcome them. Utilizing a qualitative approach with a case study design, the research involved observations and interviews to gain in-depth insights into the experiences of teachers. The findings indicate that teachers encounter significant obstacles such as limited access to technology, poor internet connectivity, insufficient teaching resources, curriculum and textbook mismatches, and minimal parental support due to socio-economic constraints. Furthermore, the lack of proper training in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka has made it difficult for teachers to adapt to new teaching demands. In response to these challenges, teachers exhibit creativity and resilience by implementing interactive teaching methods, leveraging peer collaboration through professional forums, and utilizing local materials and online resources. The study highlights the importance of systemic support from educational institutions and policymakers to enhance infrastructure, provide relevant training, and foster stronger community engagement. Ultimately, the research emphasizes that addressing these multifaceted challenges is essential to improving the quality of English writing instruction in rural education settings.
Keywords: Teaching Writing, Rural Education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

INTRODUCTION

English may be used to communicate with people all around the world because it is an international language. English has therefore emerged as a crucial topic for people to study. English is one of the most important languages, according to (Zulaeha & Riyanti, 2024) and speaking the language is now a fundamental skill that should be cultivated in all academic settings. Consequently, as more students arrive from non-English speaking nations, there will be a greater need for English teachers.

In many non-English speaking nations, including Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language. According to Mappiase and (Zulaeha & Riyanti, 2024), "In Indonesia, the English language has been regarded as a good medium of communication." Additionally, English becomes a required subject in secondary school, according to Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia. English is taught and mastered in both urban and rural communities of several parts of Indonesia.

One must concentrate on both productive and receptive abilities in order to become a proficient English user. The receptive skills are reading and listening, and the productive skills are speaking and writing. Every ability is crucial when it comes to communicating. But according to Browker (2007), writing in particular is a skill that is needed in a variety of situations throughout life. For example, you can compose articles for your assignments or send emails to friends, both domestically and abroad. Writing is a way of life for students in school; "you don't pass the course if you don't have some ability to express yourself in writing" (Brown, 2000, p. 339). In practically every educational level, it is also the most utilized talent for assessing students' performance (Molyneux, 2018). More significantly, one of the prerequisites for receiving a scholarship (like the LPDP) or even a job for Indonesian students is being able to write in English, which includes composing essays.

Nonetheless, writing has been regarded as a challenging talent that kids should learn. According to (Amalia et al., 2021), learning to write in a second language is thought to be more difficult than learning other language abilities. Writing incorporates cognitive techniques and cultural background information that help teachers educate students a variety of subjects. According to (Zulaeha & Riyanti, 2024), writing involves a number of steps that must be completed by the writer in order to create a written expression that is understandable, clear, and instructive. This ability includes the process of finding ideas in the text by not only writing the words down but also choosing and arranging them based on a number of factors. Writing includes content, organization, vocabulary, language use (grammar), and mechanism, according to Jacob in Reird (1993). According to Widiawati and Cahyono (2006), teaching writing can help to strengthen vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills for communication. As a result, teaching writing to junior high school pupils in an EFL context is still difficult.

Writing studies have been thoroughly examined throughout the past few decades. According to (Saputri & Sukarno, 2024), instructors at one of Thailand's Southern Colleges of Technology faced challenges when instructing students in writing because of their own poor writing abilities, poor use of the English language, a lack of peer critique, and a lack of writing tools. Furthermore, (Anggela et al., 2024) stated that by combining blended learning with conventional techniques, teaching writing has improved language proficiency for second and third year students at traditional Palestinian universities. Furthermore, (Amalia et al., 2021) depicted that students in Omani schools and universities faced difficulties when writing in English. For instance, they encountered difficulties when utilizing the lexical and content elements of writing. The subsequent study by Badi (2015) demonstrated that students' prior knowledge and lack of experience were the primary causes of writing instruction challenges. (Amalia et al., 2021) conducted more research and found that teachers had difficulties in creating English writing instructional materials and different methods used to mould instruction in English writing in terms of discourse, grammar, and sociolinguistic skills. Additionally, Ibrahim, Yunus, and Khairi (2017) looked at the language, structure, and content barriers that students face when studying academic writing. Similar to this, (Zulaeha & Riyanti, 2024) examined how teachers have difficulties while instructing writing because of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students, teachers, and the classroom setting. (Amalia et al., 2021) conducted the most recent study, which found that the primary obstacles to teaching writing were large class sizes, low proficiency levels, course completion pressures, poor writing practices, and a lack of resources (ICT facilities in the classroom context).

Numerous studies have been carried out in Indonesia that address the difficulties that teachers may have when instructing English in rural locations. The study "Teaching in Rural Indonesian Schools: Teacher Challenges" was carried out by (Zulaeha & Riyanti, 2024). Teachers who completed the SM-3T program and worked at several junior high schools in rural Indonesia are the study's participants. The results demonstrated that teachers in rural

Indonesian schools faced a number of difficulties, including inadequate facilities, learning resources, language barriers, parental attitudes, teacher inadequacy, student competency, and student mindset.

The second study, "EFL Teachers' Reflection in Teaching English to EFL Students of Rural Areas," was carried out by (Anggela et al., 2024). The results demonstrated that the primary obstacles faced by EFL teachers in rural areas are students' low motivation and English language ability, as well as a lack of facilities and learning materials. The third researcher, published a study titled "Difficulties in Teaching English at Rural and Urban Schools and Their Solutions." Two English teachers from SMPN3 Gantiwarno and one from SMPN1 Prambanan participated in the study. The results showed that teaching English in rural and urban schools presents distinct difficulties.   The issues are student-related and include language acquisition, student motivation, parental support, and student engagement. The issues are student-related and include language acquisition, student motivation, parental support, and student engagement. issues pertaining to the teachers, such their knowledge of IT, their proficiency with the teaching methodology, their training, and the facilities, like the absence of a representative building, computer, and LCD.

"Teachers' Challenges in Teaching English to Young Learners in Rural Area at SDN2 Sendang" is the title of another article published in the research publication by (Zulaeha & Riyanti, 2024). The results demonstrated that the status of English as a local content limited the opportunities for teachers to teach English in remote areas; the majority of teachers had non-English educational backgrounds, which impacted their proficiency; the curriculum was not in line with the current learning environment; and the socioeconomic status of parents significantly impacted students' motivation and success in learning English.

THEORETICAL REVIEW
Definition of Challenges

Challenges are obstacles that must be surmounted in order to motivate perseverance and enhance problem-solving skills. This encourages people to put forth more effort and try to solve problems because nobody can overcome obstacles unless they have courage and a strong will. A challenge, as defined by the Collins Dictionary (2008), is something that calls for a lot of work and perseverance.

Challenges, according to (Supriadi et al., 2023), are issues and problems that a person has and that call for a lot of work, energy, and talents to conquer and resolve. effectively. What are the outcomes of finishing the task, then? Someone who finishes the task is considered to have succeeded, and if someone finishes the challenge successfully, he will be considered to have won. It should be recognized, therefore, that tasks can be tailored to the skills of each individual.

Thus, drawing from a number of earlier definitions, we may deduce that challenges are anything that must be accomplished and that calls for willpower, commitment, and a lot of work.

Challenges in Teaching

Indonesia frequently faces a number of difficulties when teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Both teachers and students may experience these difficulties. According to earlier observations, English teachers encounter a number of difficulties during the teaching and learning process. According to (Supriadi et al., 2023)there are two aspects of the teaching and learning process: the component dimensions and the component-to-component interactions. Teachers, students, lesson planning, learning materials, learning strategies, and learning assessment are some of these elements. The aforementioned elements are interconnected and have a significant role in the learning process. Thus, the learning process will face a new difficulty if one of the requirements is not met.

Definition of Strategy

First of all, the word "strategic" was used in the military context to refer to a precise offensive method utilized to achieve victory. Based on various definitions of strategy based on the meaning of the language used, it can be concluded that strategy is long-term planning that is prepared with the aim of reaching a target.(Supriadi et al., 2023) states that strategy can be interpreted as planning for the distribution of military power in certain areas to achieve goals. In addition, strategy is a tool for achieving long-term objectives, follow-up programs, and resource allocation priorities, according to (Supriadi et al., 2023). A strategy is an action that offers a special combination of values to carry out a task in a way that is different from that of its competitors. According to (Supriadi et al., 2023), strategy is a method or pattern of identifying, establishing, and building doctrines that will ensure both short-term and long-term success followed by action and effort. It also focuses on how to change the future and human efforts to attain goals.

Based on a few of these definitions, the writers came to the conclusion that strategy encompasses all planning techniques that we have prepared in order to accomplish the goals and targets that we have previously established through approaches or procedures.

Teaching Strategy

The term "teaching strategy" refers to a method that instructors and other teaching staff employ during the learning process. Each teacher has a unique approach that they employ based on the subject being taught. The approach is typically modified based on the student's learning stage and degree of experience.

Learning strategies can be defined as anything that is selected to give students the resources and support they need to meet learning objectives. Then, according to (Anggela et al., 2024), learning strategies are a way for teachers and students to achieve learning objectives. The term "strategy" in the context of education refers to a plan that includes a number of activities in order to accomplish learning objectives. Teaching strategies include methodologies, approaches, student grouping, media choices in the learning process, and progress measurement.

Drawing from the aforementioned explanation, we can deduce that strategies in the learning process are any type of preparation and action that is organized as effectively as possible to establish a positive learning environment and goal. Additionally, learning strategies are employed to address issues and challenges that both teachers and students encounter.

RESEARCH Method

Type of Research

This research employed a qualitative approach. The qualitative technique is a research approach that uses data collection to uncover and explain phenomena in depth and necessitates a thorough comprehension of the subject of the study. Qualitative research is a method that generates descriptive information from people and their observed behaviour, both orally and in writing. Creswell (2012) states that qualitative research is a technique that starts with assumptions and looks at how people and individuals interpret societal problems in order to explore and comprehend both individual and social human problems. In addition, a qualitative research method is one that a researcher uses to discover the information or theories regarding study at a specific moment, according to Mukhtar (2013).

Research Design

All of the procedures involved in organizing and carrying out research are referred to as research design. A good qualitative research design, according to Willig (2001), is one that incorporates data analysis techniques into planning and design in line with the research question, and where the data collection method may yield data and information consistent

with the data analysis approach employed. This study employed a case study research approach. Case studies, according to Yin (2002), are empirical inquiries that look into a case, issue, or phenomena in a real-world setting. A case study, according to Creswell (2014), is a research technique used to fully examine an issue by obtaining comprehensive data through a variety of data collection techniques. In order to better understand and analyze people, groups, and situations, case studies are carried out. Furthermore, according to (Saputri & Sukarno, 2024), the goal of case study research is to gather comprehensive data on the topic under investigation, with the scope of the study encompassing all or specific facets.

Research Instrument

Research instruments are the tools that researchers employ to gather and generate expected empirical data. Data collection techniques or the research method were taken into consideration when setting up the research tools. Research instruments, according to Takona (2002), are crucial instruments for assessing factors like composition, ideas, conceptions, attitudes, and viewpoints. Interviews, questionnaires, and observations are all useful instruments for researchers working in the field of education. The researcher participated directly in the data gathering procedure for this study and served as both an observer and an interviewer. The observation checklist and interview guide were employed by the researcher as research tools for data collection in the observation and interview section of this study. An observation check list is a guide that includes subjects that are the focus of the observation. In order to make observations, the researcher uses an observation checklist. On the other hand, the interview guide is a sheet of questions that the researcher uses to conduct interviews with respondents.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the act of organizing, classifying, and analyzing a variety of gathered data to create systematic, structured scientific information that is subsequently turned into a study report. In qualitative research, the data analysis process will begin at the moment of data collection and continue for a certain amount of time. Following the interview, the researcher will evaluate the information gleaned from the respondent's responses. If the answers are deemed inadequate, the researcher will proceed to ask additional questions in order to gather data and information deemed reliable. After being gathered through interviews and observations, the data underwent methodical analysis. In the process of processing data, the researcher collected all information and occurrences pertaining to the object under study, among other procedures and stages. After that, the obtained data was divided into different categories based on the issue under study. Researchers did a thorough and rigorous analysis. Finding some findings and assertions from the issues under investigation was the goal of the data analysis. The study's interview data was examined using thematic analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study identifies a number of significant obstacles and flexible teaching methods used by English teachers in Tanjung Jabung Timur's remote junior high schools. Inadequate technology resources and erratic internet access pose serious challenges for teachers, negatively affecting their capacity to provide quality instruction. Since many schools lack basic supplies like projectors and LCD displays, educators must share resources and modify their lesson plans according to what is available. In line with previous research that emphasizes infrastructure deficiencies as a major obstacle to effective teaching in rural settings, this shortage not only increases their preparation workload but also lowers the quality of education (Saputri & Sukarno, 2024).

Another issue that has been noted is the discrepancy between the Kurikulum Merdeka teaching modules and textbooks, which leaves pupils perplexed and forces teachers to look for further resources. As previously mentioned in research about pedagogical disparities and

the significance of curricular realignments, this issue emphasizes the necessity for improved alignment between educational resources and curriculum needs. Additionally, due to a lack of formal training and a lack of comprehension, teachers find it difficult to execute the Kurikulum Merdeka, which forces them to rely on conventional teaching techniques. In order to help teachers adjust to new curricula, extensive professional development programs are necessary, as this conclusion validates previous research (Saputri & Sukarno, 2024).

Another big problem is getting the community and parents involved. Communication hurdles between schools and families further complicate efforts to improve parental involvement, and parents' primarily agricultural work limits their ability to finance their children's education. This problem of little parental support because of work-related limitations and communication problems is consistent with other research on the benefits of community support and parental involvement in rural schooling (Hulu, 2024). Teachers are coming up with innovative ways to overcome these obstacles, such as utilizing interactive techniques like role-plays, games, and real-world examples, as well as utilizing technology and local resources to make courses more relevant. The literature's endorsement of interactive and culturally appropriate teaching approaches is reflected in these tactics (Safitri et al., 2025).

Teachers use peer support, professional forums like KKG and MGMP, and online resources to study on their own, even in the absence of many formal training opportunities. The difficulties identified in earlier research on the professional development of rural educators are consistent with this strategy. The study emphasizes the ways in which teachers' inventiveness and resourcefulness aid in addressing current issues in education. However, it also emphasizes the necessity of organized assistance from educational establishments and governmental entities to raise the standard of education in rural areas. By highlighting the significance of filling in infrastructure gaps, matching curriculum to instructional materials, strengthening teacher preparation, and increasing family participation, the study offers insightful information about the challenges of teaching English in remote junior high schools. Due to the small sample size, the use of self-reported data, and the emphasis on teachers' viewpoints, the results may not fully account for the experiences of kids, parents, and other stakeholders. A wider scope and evaluation of other factors influencing rural schooling could be beneficial for future research, as the cross-sectional nature of this study only records a single point in time (Hulu, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teaching English writing in rural junior high schools presents a variety of interrelated challenges that significantly affect the effectiveness of instruction. One of the most critical issues is the lack of adequate technological infrastructure, such as internet access and teaching aids like projectors or LCDs. This limitation forces teachers to rely on manual or traditional methods, which can reduce student engagement and limit access to multimedia or digital learning resources that are increasingly essential in modern pedagogy.

Furthermore, the misalignment between the Kurikulum Merdeka and the available textbooks has created confusion for both students and teachers. Teachers are often required to seek supplemental materials independently without sufficient guidance or resources. This issue is compounded by the lack of formal training for teachers in implementing the new curriculum, leaving them to depend on conventional strategies that may no longer be effective or relevant to current learning standards.

Another significant obstacle is the minimal involvement of parents and the wider community in supporting the educational process. The majority of parents work in agriculture, which not only limits their time but also their ability to provide educational

support at home. Communication between schools and parents is also limited, further hindering the possibility of collaborative efforts to improve student performance.

Despite these challenges, teachers have shown remarkable resilience and creativity in overcoming the difficulties they face. Many employ interactive teaching strategies—such as role plays, games, and contextualized examples—tailored to the students' local environment and experiences. Others participate in peer-learning groups, such as KKG and MGMP, and utilize online resources to support their own professional development in the absence of formal training opportunities.

Overall, this study highlights the critical role that teachers play in adapting to rural teaching contexts, but it also underscores the urgent need for institutional support. Educational policymakers and school authorities must prioritize rural education by improving infrastructure, aligning curriculum content with teaching materials, providing targeted professional development programs, and encouraging stronger school–community partnerships. Without such systemic support, the burden will continue to fall disproportionately on teachers, potentially compromising the quality of English writing education for students in rural settings.

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