

Teachers' Challenges and Strategies in Teaching EFL in a Rural School (a Case Study at SMPN 5 Anggeraja)

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the challenges faced by teachers in teaching EFL in rural school and the strategies used by teachers to overcome the challenges. The researcher conducted this study at SMPN 5 Anggeraja, located at Jl. Veteran No. 63, Cendana, Siambo village, Anggeraja District, Enrekang Regency. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative method. The data were collected through semi-structured interview (in-depth interview). The participants of this study were two English teachers at SMPN 5 Anggeraja. From results of the study showed that there are many challenges faced by teachers in teaching EFL at SMPN 5 Anggeraja: insufficient time, low of students concentration, students are confused when using English in the learning process, lack of vocabulary, how to deliver material, teachers ability, students interest in learning EFL, difficulty in translating, and inadequate facilities and infrastructure. In addition, the strategies used by teachers to overcome challenges in teaching EFL in rural school, are time management, conducting initial diagnostic test, providing games in the learning process, restitution to students, making interesting materials and giving exams, teachers' self-reflection, providing motivational feedback, making the learning process fun, and cooperation with related parties for the procurement of Networks.

Keywords: *Teaching Challenges, Strategies to Overcome Challenges, Rural School.*

Introduction

In Indonesia, English is studied as a foreign language from junior high school to senior high school, it is a required course. The overarching goals of English language instruction at all educational levels in Indonesia goals are as follow: to increase students' oral and written communicative proficiency in the target language; to raise students' awareness of the significance of English in helping the nation compete in global community; and to increase students' comprehension of the connections between language and culture (Hidayati, 2016).

Ningrum (2020) argues that many EFL students find it difficult to understand English spoken naturally and at normal pace when learning the language. Another common issue that students have is leaning reading material. They struggle to comprehend what they read and are unable to connect the ideas in different words. When it comes to communicating, students frequently struggle since they don't have a

strong vocabulary. Additionally, students struggle with concept organization, vocabulary deficiency, and proper grammar when learning to write.

Schools in rural area are often associated with lack of adequate facilities in many aspects. Learning resources such as books are frequently insufficient, classrooms are poorly equipped, and internet access which is now commonly used to reach other learning material is often unavailable. The condition of school buildings also poses challenges. In fact, some schools are unable to conduct lessons during the rainy season. In rural settings, these issues are often accompanied by even more complex challenges.

Method

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive case study approach to explore the challenges and strategies of English teachers in teaching EFL in a rural school, especially at SMPN 5 Anggeraja. According to Cresswell (2016) stated qualitative research method is one of type of method used to describe, investigates, and understand the issue that many individuals or group of people believe to be related to social or personal issue. The data were collected from two English teachers selected through purposive sampling because of their relevant experience and understanding of the issues studied.

The primary data collection technique was the in-depth interview (semi-structured interview), allowing flexibility and deeper exploration of the topic. According to Moleong (2005:186), an in-depth interview is a process of gathering information in depth, openly, and freely, focusing on the research problem focus, and directed at the research center. The interview used open-ended question and were conducted face-to-face, with the help of recording devices (with prior consent) to ensure accuracy. The main purpose was to gather detailed information about teachers' challenges and strategies in teaching EFL in a rural school.

Results

Challenges in teaching EFL

Teachers face various challenges, including:

1. Insufficient Time

One of the main challenges is the lack of sufficient time. Teaching English as a second language requires extended learning time to help students become familiar with the language. As a result, teachers' face difficulties when the time allocated for instruction is limited. A shortage of teaching time becomes a significant obstacle for English teachers'. In the English learning process at SMPN 5 Anggeraja, the time provided is 3 to 4 hours. At this point, 2 teachers as informants, namely SH and HF, have problems regarding insufficient learning time.

2. Low of Students' Concentration

Students' low concentration in the classroom causes students to have difficulty in understanding the knowledge conveyed by the teachers. As explain informant SH that when explaining the material, the learning process is disrupted because students are not concentrating in learning process.

3. Students Confuse

The common challenges in teaching EFL faced by teacher based on the result of interview with informant HF are students confused. Students confuse means that students' feel confused when teachers use English during the learning process. Students' will feel confused and have difficulty processing every word spoken by the teacher.

4. Students' Lack of Vocabulary

The results of the interview with informant SH showed that the most challenge in teaching English at SMPN 5 Anggeraja which came from students is lack of vocabulary. Lack of vocabulary mastery in students can hinder students' understanding of the subject.

5. How to Deliver Material

In delivering material, teachers must understand how to deliver the material so that students can understand the learning material, such as how to deliver material, use simple and clear language, and create interesting material. Based on the result of interview with informant HF, the most challenges in teaching EFL are how to deliver material.

6. Abilities of the Teachers

Challenges in teaching EFL can come from the teacher himself. Based on the results of the interview above with two English teachers at SMPN 5 Anggeraja as informants, it can conclude that the challenges of teaching English that come from teachers are about mastery of material, mastery of learning methods.

7. Students Interest

Challenges can also come from students', students' interest is a challenge that comes from students in teaching EFL, this is based on the result of interview with informant SH. Students' interest is an important factor in students' learning success and students' interest can support and influence the learning process in school, especially in learning English. However, students' interest in learning English at SMPN 5 Anggeraja is very low, this can affect students' English knowledge.

8. Difficulties in Translating

Difficulties in translating are challenge in EFL teaching that come from students, as conveyed by informant HF. students at SMPN 5 Anggeraja do not know the meaning of English learning materials, let alone knowing the meaning of pronunciation, they do not know how to read. So, the problem that comes from students is how to translate.

9. Inadequate Facilities and Infrastructure

Facilities and infrastructure in learning affect the teaching and learning process in the classroom. With supporting facilities and infrastructure can help and make students learns better. On the other hand, if there is a lack of adequate facilities and infrastructures, the learning process will not be optimal and will not achieve teaching goals. However, based on the results of interviews with two informants, it shows that the school has limited facilities and infrastructure and is inadequate to support English learning.

Teachers' Strategies to Overcome the Challenges in Teaching English at SMPN 5 Anggeraja

1. Time Management

Time management in English learning is the ability to organize and allocate learning time effectively to achieve English learning goals more efficiently and productively. It involves planning, scheduling, and prioritizing to ensure optimal use of time in learning process. Therefore, all the informants managed the time during their teaching to overcome the problem of inadequate time.

2. Conducting Initial Diagnostic Test

Initial diagnostic test is a test used to thoroughly determine the weakness and strengths of students in learning materials before carrying out a more in-depth learning process so teachers can design appropriate learning programs. The result of the

interview with informant SH showed that the strategies used to overcome the common challenge in teaching EFL at SMPN 5 Anggeraja.

3. Provide Games

There are other opinion from teacher HF about the strategies to overcome the most challenges in teaching EFL, the strategy used are provide games. informant HF provided some game in learning process. Teachers provide games in the learning process where in the game the teacher places learning materials. This is done so that students better understand what the learning materials are.

4. Make Restitution

Based on the interview results, informant SH the strategies to overcome the most challenges in teaching EFL is make restitution. Based on informant SH statement, it can be shown that the strategy to overcome the most challenges in teaching English at SMPN 5 Anggeraja is to restitution students. This restitution helps students to correct their mistakes and return to the group with strong characters.

5. Create Interesting Material and Giving Exam

The next strategy to overcome the most challenges in teaching EFL is to create interesting material and giving exam. Based on the statement of the HF informant, it shows that creating material and giving tests are strategies used to overcome the biggest problems in teaching English. When giving exam to students, the exams are no different from practice questions, only changing numbers, names of objects, etc.

6. Teachers Self-reflection

Based on the results of interviews with informants SH and HF regarding strategies to overcome the challenges that come from teachers. Based on the results of interviews with the two informants, namely informants SI and HF, it can be concluded that teachers' self-reflection is the strategy used to overcome problems that come from teachers. Teachers' self-reflection is meant to always study and practice.

7. Providing Motivational Feedback

Based on the result of interview with informant SH, the teachers providing motivational feedback to students to increase interest in learning. Based on a statement from informant SH, the strategy used to overcome the challenges that arise from students is always to motivate students about the benefits of learning English. Always provide motivation to students about the benefits of learning and knowing English.

8. Make the Learning Process Fun

Based on the results of the interview with informant HF, it can be concluded that the strategies used to overcome the challenges that arise from students are by making the learning process fun, such as creating interesting materials and providing games during the learning process. This is strategy can help students to grow the desire, mood to know English. When students have the desire to know, they will automatically learn.

Discussion

Based on the result above, the researcher concludes the teaching English as foreign language in this school is not easy, especially in rural school. There are many challenges in teaching EFL faced by the teachers in SMPN 5 Anggeraja and also there are many strategies that teachers use to overcom the challenges in teaching EFL in this school.

1. Challenges in teaching EFL in SMPN 5 Anggeraja

There are several challenges in teaching EFL faced by teachers' at SMPN 5 Anggerja. First, challenges are about the lack of time in learning process. Two English teachers as informants both expressed that the time provided to teach English was

insufficient, especially since the level of English of students at SMPN 5 Anggeraja could be said to be still very lacking, so more time was needed to learn. It is in accordance with Rahmiyati (2022) in her thesis, she stated teachers' experience constraints with time allocation in teaching English because the time provided is limited. In addition, the teachers need to use this time to motivate students.

Second, the common challenges faced when teaching English. For common challenges, there are differences of opinion from the two respondents where respondent SH expressed the common challenges faced, namely about low of students' concentration, which is caused by students who are not focused, this is because they are not interested in learning English. This is supported Holguin&Morales (2016) said that the low interest in learning was seen in students' behavior during the learning process in class, such as students not showing enthusiasm during the English learning process. For other challenges as expressed by teachers HF, the common challenges faced when teaching is about students confuse. Students are confused when having a conversation in English. It is in accordance with Zulhijjah (2022), who said that English is a new subject in Junior High School. Because students' do not have fundamental English from Elementary school. Students' level of knowledge and mastery of English is still low.

Third, the most challenges in teaching English, lack of vocabulary is still a most problem in learning English at SMPN 5 Anggeraja. With regard to this issue, Hasan (2016) states that students encountered is mastering vocabulary In addition, teacher HF as an informant also mentioned that the most challenges faced while teaching English at this school are about how to deliver the material. In this case, teachers must think about how to deliver the material when teaching English as a second language to students at SMPN 5 Anggerja so that later students understand and comprehend what the teachers conveying.

Fourth, the most challenges in teaching EFL that come from teachers themselves. Based on the results with two informants, it can be concluded that the challenges in teaching EFL that come from teachers is the abilities of teachers, which include mastery of materials and mastery of learning strategies.

Fifth, challenges those come from students. Informant SH revealed about the challenges of learning EFL that comes from students, that is students' interest in learning English. In the learning process, there are some students who are less interest in learning English. It is equivalent to Rahmiyati (2022) research that found students are less interested in learning English, this can affect the atmosphere during learning activities. In addition, informant HF revealed that the learning challenges that come from students is about difficulties in translating. In line with the statement above, Pertiwi, Rahmawati, and Hafidah (2021) explain teach vocabulary students can't speak foreign language provides a collection of various vocabulary to memorize because the students will only fell forced to memorize everything.

Last, the problems of facilities and infrastructure provide at SMPN 5 Anggeraja. For the problem of facilities and infrastructure, both informants expressed that the facilities and infrastructure provided by the school to support the learning process were inadequate and could be said have many shortcomings, but the main problems was about the network. It is in accordance with the finding of the research conducted by Mumary (2017), who present that the available facilities did not support the English teaching Process.

2. Teachers' strategies to overcome the challenges in teaching EFL

There are several strategies used by teachers to overcome the challenges in teaching EFL at SMPN 5 Anggeraja.

First, the strategies to overcome insufficient time in the learning process, it can be concluded that teachers must be able to organize or manage time in such a way that learning objectives can be achieved. In addition, the two informants also mentioned several other ways, namely using effective methods and the teachers' mastery of the material to be taught. It is supported by Sya'roni (2021), who stated that time management need to be used to plan time as effectively as possible. With time management, the activities will run at a predetermined time.

Second, the strategy used by teacher SH to overcome the common challenges in teaching EFL is that teacher conduct initial diagnostic tests. Diagnostic tests are tests to determine students' strengths and weaknesses in learning. Provide games in learning process is a strategy used by teacher HF to overcome this problem. In the game, the teacher puts the material so teacher hopes that students can understand what the material is, and understand what the teachers is conveying. This is supported by Schiefele (2017) who has suggested that one way to get students excited about learning is to introduce interactive games or quizzes in class.

Third, the strategy used by the teacher SH to overcome the most challenges in teaching EFL is by conducting restitution to students. Restitution is a collaborative process that teachers students about problems, and help students think about what kind of people they want to be, and how they should treat others. So, this restitution corrects their mistakes and return to the group with a good character. In addition, teacher HF as an informant also mentioned that the strategy used by teachers to overcome the most challenges in teaching EFL is by creating interesting materials and giving exam related to the material. However, in giving assignments, the question given are no different from the exercises given previously, even the teachers only changes such as numbers, objects, place names, and others because if the teachers are changed as a whole, students will not be able complete the tasks given.

Fourth, the strategies used to overcome the challenges that come from teachers' conveyed by the two informants. The statements expressed by the informants regarding the strategies to overcome English learning problems that come from teachers are teachers' self-reflection where teachers must always learn and practice.

Fifth, strategies to overcome the challenges that come from students. For the strategy used to overcome this challenge, informant SI revealed that always motivates students to learning English and also always conveys the importance of learning English. It is in accordance with the research conducted by Rahmiyati (2022), who found that the consistent motivation from teachers' can encourage students to appreciate English more. Each teachers have their own way of motivating their students to learn English. In addition, informant HF uses strategy to overcome these challenges, the strategy is making the learning process interesting and fun. When their mood, the need to learn and know English becomes great, that's where students' have the desire to know and learn, they will outomatically learn.

Conclusion

1. There are several challenges in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) faced by the teachers. The challenges included: (a) insufficient time; (b) low of students' concentration; (c) students confuse; (d) students' lack of vocabulary; (e) how to delivery material; (f) abilities of the teachers'; (g) students' interest; (h) difficulties in translating; (i) inadequate facilities and infrastructure.

2. There are several strategies used by teachers to overcome the challenges in teaching English at SMPN 5 Anggeraja. The strategies include: (a) time management; (b)

conducting initial diagnostic test; (c) provided games in the learning process; (d) conducting restitution to students; (e) creating interesting materials and giving exam; (f) teachers self-reflection; (g) providing motivational feedback; (h) making the learning process fun; (i) teachers hope that school will cooperate with related parties to procure network.

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