

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHING AT UPT SMPN SATU ATAP KEBUN TINGGI,
KECAMATAN KAMPAR KIRI HULU, KABUPATEN KAMPAR, PROVINSI RIAU**

Mareti¹, Melyan Melani²

*maretipayakumbuh2000@gmail.com*¹, *melyannmelani@gmail.com* ²

^{1,2}Universitas Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi

¹*maretipayakumbuh2000@gmail.com*, ²*melyannmelani@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

English language teaching in rural schools often encounters substantial challenges that hinder effective learning. This study investigates the challenges and strategies of English language teaching at UPT SMPN Satu Atap Kebun Tinggi, located in Kampar Kiri Hulu Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews involving four key informants (an English teacher, a student, a school management staff member, and the vice principal), classroom observations, and documentation. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by methodological triangulation to ensure credibility. The findings indicate four major challenges: inadequate learning facilities, students' low self-confidence in using English, geographical barriers affecting school access, and a shortage of qualified English teachers. To address these challenges, the school implemented several strategies, including continuous teacher professional development, adaptive use of available technology, and collaboration with local government and the community. These strategies helped sustain English learning activities despite existing limitations, highlighting the importance of contextual and integrated support for improving English language teaching in rural education settings.

Keywords: *English language teaching, rural schools, learning challenges, teaching strategies*

ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah pedesaan sering menghadapi berbagai tantangan yang menghambat efektivitas proses belajar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji tantangan dan strategi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di UPT SMPN Satu Atap Kebun Tinggi, Kecamatan Kampar Kiri Hulu, Kabupaten Kampar, Provinsi Riau. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap empat informan kunci (guru bahasa Inggris, siswa, staf manajemen sekolah, dan wakil kepala sekolah), observasi kelas, serta dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, dengan didukung triangulasi metode untuk menjamin keabsahan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat tantangan utama,

yaitu keterbatasan fasilitas pembelajaran, rendahnya kepercayaan diri siswa dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris, hambatan geografis yang memengaruhi akses ke sekolah, serta keterbatasan jumlah guru bahasa Inggris yang berkualitas. Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, sekolah menerapkan beberapa strategi, antara lain pengembangan profesionalisme guru secara berkelanjutan, pemanfaatan teknologi yang tersedia secara adaptif, serta kerja sama dengan pemerintah daerah dan masyarakat. Strategi-strategi ini mampu menjaga keberlangsungan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris meskipun dalam kondisi yang terbatas, serta menegaskan pentingnya dukungan kontekstual dan terpadu dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di daerah pedesaan.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, sekolah pedesaan, tantangan pembelajaran, strategi pembelajaran

A. Background

Education plays a fundamental role in developing human potential and advancing national progress. Through education, individuals acquire knowledge, shape attitudes, and develop skills essential for social and economic development. The importance of education is also emphasized in the Qur'an, Surah Al-'Alaq (1–5), which highlights the obligation to seek knowledge as a foundation of human excellence. Consequently, the quality of education becomes a crucial indicator of societal well-being.

Despite its importance, educational quality remains uneven, particularly in rural areas. Rural regions are commonly characterized by low population density,

geographical isolation, limited access to public services, and dependence on primary economic activities (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011; Like & Rebbeka, 2022). These conditions often result in inadequate educational infrastructure, shortages of qualified teachers, and limited learning resources, causing rural schools to lag behind their urban counterparts. In the Indonesian context, Roza (2020) highlights that rural schools frequently experience structural limitations such as insufficient facilities, limited teacher availability, and minimal institutional support, which directly affect the effectiveness of the learning process.

These disparities significantly affect English Language Teaching (ELT). Richards and Rodgers (1988) define ELT as a field that

encompasses various approaches, methods, and strategies designed to develop learners' communicative competence. Harmer (2007) emphasizes that effective ELT depends on teachers' ability to adapt teaching methods, materials, and classroom practices to students' needs and learning contexts. Furthermore, Kumaravadivelu's (2012) postmethod pedagogy underscores the importance of contextual sensitivity, suggesting that English teaching should respond to local, social, and cultural conditions rather than rely on rigid instructional methods. Supporting this view, Loli (2020) argues that English language instruction in rural schools must be context-based, flexible, and responsive to students' real-life environments to enhance learning effectiveness.

In rural contexts, however, the implementation of effective ELT faces multidimensional challenges. Previous studies indicate that English teaching in rural areas is constrained by inadequate infrastructure, including limited teaching media, absence of language laboratories, and poor access to technology (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003; Joseph, 2022).

Psychological factors also play a critical role, as rural students often demonstrate low motivation and low self-confidence in using English due to limited exposure and anxiety when communicating in a foreign language (Soomro et al., 2023). Additionally, geographical barriers such as remote locations, poor road conditions, and long travel distances further hinder students' school attendance and teachers' professional development opportunities (Joseph, 2022). These conditions align with Roza's (2020) assertion that geographical and infrastructural constraints are major contributors to educational inequality in rural areas.

These challenges are evident at UPT SMPN Satu Atap Kebun Tinggi, located in Kampar Kiri Hulu Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. As the only junior high school in the area, the school operates in a geographically remote environment with limited infrastructure and learning facilities. Preliminary observations indicate that English language teaching at this school is affected by students' low motivation and confidence, insufficient learning resources, and geographical constraints that limit access to the

school. These conditions pose serious challenges to the effectiveness and sustainability of English learning activities, as also emphasized by Loli (2020) in her discussion on rural English education.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the challenges encountered in English language teaching at UPT SMPN Satu Atap Kebun Tinggi and to explore the strategies implemented to address those challenges. By integrating theoretical perspectives on English language teaching and rural education with empirical findings, this study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of effective English teaching practices in rural school contexts.

B. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the challenges and strategies of English language teaching in a rural school context. This approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of real conditions, experiences, and perspectives of participants related to English teaching practices.

The research was conducted at UPT SMPN Satu Atap Kebun Tinggi, located in Kampar Kiri Hulu Subdistrict, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. The participants consisted of four key informants, namely an English teacher, a student, a school management staff member, and the vice principal, who were selected purposively based on their involvement in English language teaching and school management.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information regarding the challenges and strategies in English language teaching. Classroom observations were used to examine the actual teaching and learning process, while documentation supported the data obtained from interviews, observations and documentation.

The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis procedures, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the credibility of the findings, methodological triangulation was applied by comparing data obtained from interviews and observations

C.Finding and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several major challenges in English language teaching at UPT SMPN Satu Atap Kebun Tinggi, a rural junior high school. These challenges include inadequate learning facilities, students' psychological barriers, geographical constraints, and a shortage of qualified teachers.

The first challenge identified is the limited learning facilities. Classroom observations and interviews showed that the school lacks essential teaching resources such as English textbooks, teaching media, internet access, and language laboratories. These limitations restrict teachers' ability to implement interactive and communicative English learning activities. This finding is consistent with Atchoarena and Gasperini (2003), who state that rural schools often suffer from poor infrastructure that negatively affects teaching effectiveness. Similarly, Joseph (2022) emphasizes that inadequate facilities remain one of the primary obstacles to English language teaching in rural areas.

The second challenge relates to students' psychological factors, particularly low motivation and self-

confidence in learning English. Interviews with students revealed that many perceive English as a difficult subject and feel anxious when asked to speak in English. This condition limits students' participation in classroom activities. This finding aligns with Soomro et al. (2023), who reported that rural students often experience anxiety and lack confidence due to limited exposure to English. Loli (2020) also highlights that students' learning motivation is strongly influenced by their environment and parental support, which are often limited in rural contexts.

Another significant challenge is the geographical condition of the school. Most students live far from the school and must travel through difficult terrain, especially during the rainy season. Poor road conditions often cause irregular attendance and reduce students' learning engagement. This finding supports Joseph's (2022) argument that geographical isolation and transportation difficulties hinder access to education in rural areas and affect both students and teachers.

In addition to these challenges, the school also faces a shortage of

qualified teachers. Limited professional development opportunities and difficult living conditions in rural areas discourage experienced teachers from staying long-term. This condition affects the quality of English instruction and learning continuity. Adedeji and Olaniyan (2011) explain that rural schools frequently experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers due to isolation and limited facilities.

Despite these challenges, the school has implemented several strategies to sustain English language teaching. One strategy is continuous professional development, where teachers actively participate in teacher working groups (MGMP) and informal training programs to improve their teaching competence. This approach reflects Harmer's (2007) view that teachers play a crucial role in adapting teaching methods to students' needs and contexts.

Another strategy is the adaptive use of technology, although limited. Teachers utilize simple digital tools and available internet access when possible to support learning activities. This finding supports Roza (2020), who emphasizes that even limited

access to technology can enhance English learning if used creatively and contextually.

Furthermore, the school strengthens collaboration with local government and the community to improve educational support, particularly in addressing infrastructure and access issues. This collaborative effort aligns with Kumaravadivelu's (2012) postmethod pedagogy, which stresses the importance of contextual and locally responsive teaching strategies.

Overall, the results indicate that English language teaching in rural schools faces complex and interconnected challenges. However, through adaptive strategies, teacher commitment, and community collaboration, English learning activities can continue despite existing limitations.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that English language teaching at UPT SMPN Satu Atap Kebun Tinggi faces multifaceted challenges commonly found in rural educational contexts. The major challenges include limited educational infrastructure, geographical barriers, low student

motivation and confidence, as well as a shortage of qualified English teachers. These challenges are interrelated and collectively influence the effectiveness of English learning processes in the classroom. Poor road conditions and geographical isolation reduce student attendance and learning consistency, while limited facilities restrict the implementation of interactive and communicative English learning activities.

Despite these constraints, the findings reveal that English language teaching at the school continues through adaptive and context-sensitive strategies. Teachers play a central role in sustaining learning by adjusting teaching methods to students' needs and conditions. Participation in professional development activities such as teacher working groups (MGMP) and informal training programs helps teachers improve their pedagogical competence and maintain instructional quality, even in limited rural settings.

Furthermore, the adaptive use of technology, although constrained by limited internet access, contributes positively to the learning process. Teachers utilize simple digital tools

and available online resources creatively to support English instruction. This finding aligns with the view that technology, when applied contextually, can enhance learning outcomes in rural schools. In addition, collaboration between the school, local government, and the surrounding community strengthens educational support, particularly in addressing infrastructure and accessibility issues.

Overall, this study highlights that while rural English language teaching encounters significant challenges, these obstacles do not entirely hinder learning implementation. Through teacher commitment, adaptive teaching strategies, and community collaboration, English language learning activities can continue effectively. These findings suggest that improving teacher professional development, strengthening institutional support, and enhancing rural infrastructure are essential steps toward improving the quality of English education in rural areas.

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