

Challenges and Strategies of Teaching English in Rural Area Junior High School (Batuatas Island Southeast Sulawesi)

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Abstract

Challenges in teaching English in rural schools are often caused by limited resources, lack of student motivation, and the dominance of local languages. This study aims to identify the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English and analyze strategies to overcome them. This descriptive qualitative research with a case study design used direct observation and interviews with four English teachers. The results showed challenges such as limited vocabulary, lack of family support, an unsuitable independent curriculum, lack of English language foundation, and inadequate facilities. To overcome these challenges, teachers use various strategies, including paired dialogue, image-based learning, vocabulary learning through dictionaries, and direct practice through games. This study contributes to teachers' understanding of adjusting teaching methods to the local context and encourages students to be more active in learning English.

Keywords:

Challenges,
Strategies,
Teaching English,
Rural area

1. Introduction

English language skills are an important skill that every individual must have in the current era. In the world of education, English has been implemented as a subject taught from elementary school to university, both in urban and rural educational institutions. However, in reality, the use of English is certainly not easy for students, given the position of English in Indonesia as a foreign language. The status of English as the first foreign language in Indonesia differs from that of the second or third foreign languages used by language communities in Indonesia. The status of English as a foreign language in Indonesia makes the teaching of English challenging (Umiyati & Widayanti, 2022).

Teaching English has become more difficult for students, especially when English learning is linked to the context of rural schools, because rural schools do not have as many opportunities to learn English as urban schools (Harlina & Yusuf, 2020). This causes students in rural areas to often feel less confident in using English, mainly because opportunities to learn English are much more limited than in urban schools. This gap has the potential to create significant differences between the English language abilities of students in urban and rural areas (Suputra et al., 2021). Therefore, teaching English in rural areas poses a challenge for teachers.

A challenge is an obstacle or hindrance that must be faced and resolved properly and effectively (Nimasari et al., 2024). These challenges include the conditions of teachers in rural areas which are closely related to limited educational infrastructure such as lack of school facilities, difficulty of access, and technological and social changes (Insan et al., 2023). This can also be linked to rural areas in Batuatas Island schools, where students are often less interested in learning English because they consider it difficult and uninteresting. Even though they study, the learning process is often not as effective as in urban schools, due to limited facilities and infrastructure and a lack of innovative teaching staff. Additionally, students use local languages and Indonesian more frequently in their daily lives, which further weakens their English language skills. This can result in low levels of English proficiency among rural students, which in turn may hinder their ability to compete in today's era.

To overcome these problems, efforts are needed from teachers to design and implement English learning strategies that are appropriate to the context and needs of students in rural areas. Learning strategies are ways that will be used by teachers to select learning activities that will be used during the

learning process (Millah, 2019). By realizing high-quality learning, it is equally important to formulate learning strategies that best suit students' conditions, learning styles, and comfort in learning (Maghfiroh et al., 2024). This means that the strategies used by teachers help students to more easily understand the material so that the objectives of the teaching and learning process are achieved. English teaching strategies are important for English teachers to recognize important ways of adjusting their lessons and assessments to meet the needs of individual students (Oktavia et al., 2023). Thus, strategies are indispensable regarding learning activities, because learning activities involve the search, formation and transfer of knowledge, which is often called teaching and learning activities.

Based on initial research, the researcher observed challenges at the Batuatas Island junior high school related to inadequate access to internet resources, lack of equipment for learning facilities and infrastructure available at schools and researchers also observed that English language learning was only learned when studying in junior high school, whereas in general in urban schools English language subjects had been taken during elementary school education. This also refers to previous research conducted by Burhamzah et al., (2024); Zulhijjah, (2022) the findings of their study indicate that the obstacles encountered stem from insufficient resources, inadequate teacher training, a non-supportive environment, and a lack of motivation and assistance from both parents and the community. Additionally, the habits of students, particularly their frequent use of their local language, contributed to these challenges. However, another study conducted by Halik & Nusrath, (2020) the findings showed that the challenges in teaching English to students in rural schools because many students showed their dislike in learning English. Meanwhile, research conducted by Pramesty et al., (2022) showed that some teachers are not from English education, the status of English as local content and the socio-economic status of parents that affect students learning English.

From the above problems, so this makes researcher interested in examining the challenges and strategies of teachers teaching English in rural areas precisely on the island of Batuatas southeast Sulawesi. This study differs from previous studies, which generally did not pay attention to the specific context of Batuatas Island. With an approach that focuses on local conditions, this study aims to identify the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English at Batuatas Island Junior High School and analyze strategies that can be applied by teachers to overcome these challenges, thereby contributing new insights to the field of English education in rural areas. Therefore, in writing this article, the author will formulate several problem formulations that will serve as the main reference, namely (1) What challenges do teachers face in teaching English at Batuatas Island Junior High School? (2) What strategies can teachers implement to overcome the challenges of teaching English?

With the above research, it can be concluded that this research is important to do because it is to find the causal factors or other challenges faced by teachers, so that it can provide solutions in the form of new strategies that will be used in teaching English in the current era, especially in rural areas. By understanding the challenges and effective strategies, it is hoped that the quality of English learning in rural areas can be improved and the gap with urban areas can be minimized.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This research is a case study with a descriptive qualitative approach. In this study, the problem is discussed through descriptive qualitative data that aims to investigate the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English and the strategies used to overcome these challenges based on the reasons for the case study in rural schools on Batuatas Island, Southeast Sulawesi. After data collection, the data was analyzed using descriptive analysis, which was presented through sentences and quotations to illustrate and provide evidence that could be presented.

2.2 Research participants

This study was conducted in two junior high schools, namely SMPN 1 and SMPN 2 Batuatas, Southeast Sulawesi. In addition, the research participants used pseudonyms as part of the research agreement. This study used purposive sampling techniques by considering the relationship between the research objectives and the research subjects. The research participants consisted of four English teachers, all of whom are listed in Table 1 using codes and descriptions to provide more detailed information.

Table 1
Coding of interviewed teachers

Coding	Description
T1-a	First English teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Batuatas
T1-b	Second English teacher SMP Negeri 1 Batuatas
T2-a	First English teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Batuatas
T2-b	Second English teacher SMP Negeri 2 Batuatas

2.3 Data Collection Technique

Based on the results of data collection in the field, specifically at SMPN Batuatas, the author used interview and observation techniques. To collect information, structured interviews were used, with questions prepared by the researcher so that the information collected would facilitate data preparation in the study. The observation method used was direct observation, which was carried out over a period of two months. The researcher filled out the observation sheet using a simple table containing several observation statements.

SMPs on Batuatas Island, Southeast Sulawesi, are situated in a geographically remote and rural context characterized by limited population density, restricted educational infrastructure, and constrained transportation access. Batuatas Island is inhabited by a small coastal community, with only a few junior high schools serving students dispersed across villages. Access to schools largely depends on sea transportation, which is weather-dependent and irregular, often disrupting attendance, teacher mobility, and the distribution of learning resources. These structural conditions place Batuatas schools at a disadvantage compared to urban counterparts. National data consistently show a significant gap in English proficiency between students in rural and urban Indonesia, where urban students demonstrate higher exposure, instructional quality, and learning outcomes in English, while rural students face limited input, minimal practice opportunities, and strong dominance of local languages. Within this context, English functions strictly as a foreign language with minimal authentic exposure beyond the classroom.

This study is theoretically grounded in **rural education theory**, which emphasizes how geographical isolation, infrastructural limitations, and socio-cultural conditions shape learning opportunities, as well as **EFL pedagogy**, which highlights the importance of contextualized instruction, input scarcity, and learner motivation in foreign-language settings. By situating SMP Batuatas within these demographic, statistical, and theoretical perspectives, this research underscores that the challenges of teaching English on the island are not merely pedagogical but deeply structural, reinforcing the urgency of context-responsive strategies to reduce the persistent rural urban educational gap.

2.4 Data analysis

The data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles and Huberman Model integrated by Sugianto (2017), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Challenges Teachers Face in Teaching English at Batuatas Island Junior High School

Data on the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English was obtained from observations and interviews. Based on observation data, this study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 and SMP Negeri 2 Pulau Batuatas, Southeast Sulawesi. Both schools face serious challenges related to inadequate facilities, given their remote locations surrounded by sea, far from the city center. This situation has an impact on English language teaching, as inadequate learning media, such as the lack of electricity in classrooms, internet connection, or projectors, hinders the use of varied teaching methods. In addition, the absence of fans makes students feel hot, which can interfere with their comfort while studying. The use of dictionaries for translation depends on the personal dictionaries brought by students, but not all students have dictionaries due to their parents' economic limitations.

In addition, English is only taught at the junior high school level, which poses a challenge for English teachers. Parents are also less motivated, as they believe that after graduating from school, girls should marry early, while boys can start working immediately. Students then find English difficult and are less interested in learning it, preferring to use local languages and Indonesian in their daily communication rather than English. The transition to the new curriculum, known as the "independent curriculum," is not suitable for rural schools because these schools lack adequate facilities and

infrastructure. The requirements to meet standards are often burdensome because the independent curriculum strongly emphasizes the active role of students in the learning process. This curriculum encourages students to be more directly involved in learning, rather than just passively receiving information.

Based on interview data, the challenges faced by teachers when teaching English at Batuatas Junior High School are as follows. T1-a said that:

“The challenge is that the children lack English vocabulary. I don't have to go far if I ask a question, I just tell them to try to memorize subjects such as I, you, we, they and so on. Then we follow by making sentences of course there is this subject and using what to be, I say these are basic things. In the context of our conversation, we use this everyday. Tomorrow we ask the children to forget again, so it doesn't make an impression on their brains, I tell them, knowledge exists if we learn. Learning English must be repeated, that is the formula.” [T1-a, February 10, 2025]

Based on the results of the interviews above, the challenges that teachers encountered when teaching English at Batuatas Junior High School included a lack of English vocabulary, as children had a limited vocabulary. They also faced difficulty remembering basic concepts, even after being taught foundational topics such as subjects and the use of “to be.” Children often forgot these concepts the next day due to a lack of retention, which did not imprint on their brains. Consequently, vocabulary repetition became more important. T1-a emphasized that the key to learning English was repetition.

In line with the statement made by T1-a, T1-b also mentioned that:

“The challenge that I encounter is when students do not know basic English because it will start from the beginning of learning English, lack of ability to speak English because there is no habit in the classroom or outside the classroom to apply speaking using English, they usually use local languages and Indonesian not to mention there is no motivation from parents to learn English at home.” [T1-b, February 12, 2025]

Based on the interview with T1-b, there were several challenges encountered in teaching English at Batuatas Junior High School. Students did not have a strong foundation in English, so the learning process had to start from scratch. Additionally, students were less able to speak English due to a lack of habit in using the language, both inside and outside the classroom, as they more often used local language and Indonesian. The lack of support from home overall hindered students' progress in learning English.

As also stated by T2-a:

“The facilities are inadequate, you know that this is a remote area, the point is not adequate. If the teacher is not smart in providing interesting and enjoyable methods for students in teaching, of course they will have difficulty understanding, especially English which is a new language for them. All they know is their local language and Indonesian so when they get English they will complain because it is difficult to use English. Then the current curriculum change is the independent curriculum but in my opinion it is not in accordance with Batuatas school because in Batuatas school it still depends on the teacher, especially English because of the lack of adequate infrastructure earlier, also here the lecture system is still used, at least with the lecture system from the teacher students can understand.” [T2-a, February 18, 2025]

In the interview session with T2-a, there were several challenges encountered in teaching English at Batuatas Junior High School. Inadequate facilities were the main obstacle, so teachers had to be creative in using interesting and fun teaching methods to help students understand the material, especially since English was a new language for them. Students were accustomed to local languages and Indonesian, making English feel difficult. The Merdeka curriculum was considered less suitable for schools in remote areas due to its dependence on teachers, particularly in English language learning. Limited facilities and infrastructure made curriculum implementation difficult.

T2-b also mentioned that:

“In my opinion, yes, that is providing learning media because this is a remote area so the facilities here are still limited so teachers must be creative to provide the media used for teaching. Then there are environmental factors, the name in the village must affect the environment such as the school environment using Indonesian and the environment at home certainly uses local languages, so students learn English only when they are in class or it is already the day where

English is taught. In contrast to schools in the city, there are internet concessions that can use cellphones to watch movies, listen to music, English game applications, not only that in the city, students can definitely take private English lessons.” [T2-b, February 20, 2025]

The results of the T2-b interview revealed some challenges in learning English in remote areas. Limited facilities in these areas required teachers to be more creative in providing interesting learning media. The environment in the village, both at school and at home, was dominated by the use of Indonesian and local languages, so students were only exposed to English when they were in the classroom. Additionally, the gap in access and opportunity to learn English between students in remote areas and those in urban areas was significant.

Findings from interviews with four English teachers at Batuatas Island Junior High School showed that there were several challenges that teachers encountered when teaching English at Batuatas Junior High School. The teachers found that students had limited vocabulary, which hindered their ability to communicate well in English. A lack of motivation from the family environment and low student motivation led to a disinterest in learning English. Students often used the local language and Indonesian in communication. The independent curriculum was not suitable for the conditions of remote area schools, and inadequate facilities further exacerbated the situation.

Meanwhile, the results of interviews with teachers regarding the most difficult challenges in teaching English in the classroom are as follows. This was as stated by T1-a:

“The challenge is also for us teachers. Teachers and students, so we teachers also need to learn. Especially me, who is already old, so our memory is already lacking. So we need to learn. To be able to transfer knowledge, teachers must know earlier so that we make it easier for how we design the material to be somewhat understood by students. The most difficult challenge is also that in this day and age, everything needs technology, for example, learning through technology will be easier, but with the limitations of this area, we were here yesterday to apply PBL (project-based learning). Sometimes it is also not appropriate here because of the limitations of media, electricity. While he needs us to have a laptop or infocus. But again that's the case. I remember yesterday we PPG yesterday was no longer directly online. We are only in the form of videos, teaching then on video and we send it via a link. So this has a big challenge for us here, one of which is the limited learning media.” [T1-a, February 10, 2025]

Based on the above statement, it showed that challenges were not only faced by students but also by teachers who needed to continue learning, especially those who were elderly with limited memory. Teachers had to first master the material in order to design lessons that were easy for students to understand. Thus, the toughest challenge was the limited technology in the area, which hindered the implementation of project-based learning (PBL) due to a lack of media and electricity for using laptops or projectors. Even teacher training was conducted online through videos, making the limited availability of learning media a significant challenge.

A statement from T1-b also revealed that:

“The challenge is that students lack speculation in English. That's where we learn the basics. Why? Because students are less able, shy to speak English. In the beginning, they lack confidence to speak English in front of the class. Especially in classes where there are many students, sometimes the class is not conducive or crowded, those who practice going forward in front of the class sometimes their voices are not heard. The obstacle is because students lack confidence. It's different if the writing of the students is difficult in composing sentences. The challenge is also due to limited facilities, for example, there is no internet connection, the electricity uses solar power so if it rains the lights become dim so of course the conditions in the classroom become dark.” [T1-b, February 12, 2025]

In the interview session with T1-b, several challenges were encountered in teaching English at Batuatas Junior High School. There was a lack of speaking ability, as students had limited English speaking skills and a lack of confidence, which made them feel embarrassed to speak English in front of the class. The classroom conditions were not conducive, as the crowded environment made it difficult to hear students practicing speaking. Additionally, students struggled with composing sentences, making it hard for them to create English sentences. Limited facilities, such as the absence of an internet connection and reliance on solar power for electricity, caused the classroom to become dark when it rained.

In line with the statements made by T1-a and T1-b, T2-a also mentioned that:

“The challenge is actually that the most difficult challenge is that in elementary school they are not taught English. That way the children have difficulty understanding English lessons. Especially the basics, they don't know it if they don't know the basics, they will find it difficult. So my challenge is, basically they have to know the basics first. So first, give the vocabulary first and then start writing in the form of sentence construction.” [T2-a, February 18, 2025]

Based on the above statement, the toughest challenge was the students' lack of basic English, as it had not been taught in elementary school, making it difficult for them to understand the lessons. Teachers focused on providing the basics first, starting with vocabulary and then moving on to writing in the form of sentence construction.

In addition, T2-b also revealed that:

“When talking about the most difficult challenges in class, one of them is in writing skills, students do not know the basics of writing, when directed to write about their experiences to be made into a story, sometimes students are still blank, don't understand what to write. Even though they have been directed to use the past tense part how, then they can tell what activities during yesterday's vacation can be developed into several sentences or paragraphs and they are still confused about how to do it. Secondly, the sentence arrangement is still not possible. So what is a good sentence like, how to use the sentence, and punctuation they don't understand and the writing is not in accordance with what is specified. So inevitably we have to be guided one by one. So as much as possible make an experience using English then transcribe it using English using a dictionary so as much as possible the student must have his own dictionary.” [T2-b, February 20, 2025]

Based on the above statement, one of the most difficult challenges in the classroom was the students' lack of writing skills, as they often felt confused and did not know what to write. In addition, issues with good sentence structure, proper sentence usage, punctuation, and appropriate writing also arose. Therefore, teachers had to guide students one by one, encouraging them to write about their experiences in Indonesian and then translate those into English with the help of a dictionary.

The findings from the interviews with four English teachers at Batuatas Island Junior High School showed that there were some of the most difficult challenges in teaching English in the classroom. The teachers found that students did not have a strong foundation in English because it had not been taught in primary school, causing them to struggle with junior high school lessons. Limited access to learning resources and media made it difficult for teachers to implement interactive learning methods. Additionally, there was a lack of student confidence, insufficient English language practice both in school and outside of it, and difficulty in composing sentences.

3.2.2 Strategies Teachers Implement to Overcome the Challenges of Teaching English

Data on the strategies used by teachers in teaching English at SMPN Batuatas was obtained from interview data, as stated by T1-a:

“The strategy is like yesterday during English lessons in the form of speaking, I taught more together to imitate English pronunciation. After that, it was on to the group. So they can practice dialog with friends later after that, then to personal. So when students can be said to be still shy to speak English. So usually paired with children who can already speak in order to practice dialog together and the effect is that children who are less able want to learn from children who are able. So of course it has a positive impact on students who do not understand speaking. So in essence, the most important thing is to increase English vocabulary.” [T1-a, February 10, 2025]

Based on the above statement, the strategies applied in English lessons for speaking started with imitating pronunciation together, followed by dialog practice in groups and personal practice. Students who were shy to speak were paired with more advanced classmates to practice dialog, thereby increasing their motivation. Consequently, enhancing English vocabulary became the main focus of learning.

In addition, T1-b also revealed that:

“For the strategy, the teacher uses a lesson plan according to the stages, for example, grade 7 who has just received English subjects, so the teacher starts from the new basics taught from stage to stage according to the teaching module. Usually I use cognitive memory strategies, I

bring my own media such as a picture of someone who is doing activities I paste on the board then students start making vocabulary notes in the book about the picture initially vocabulary notes using Indonesian and then continue with translating into English. Now this strategy will help students to memorize vocabulary and improve understanding. Then for the writing strategy, we have a personal approach, sometimes I make groups so that it is easier to teach sentence construction.” [T1-b, February 12, 2025]

Based on the above statement, the seventh grade English learning strategy started from the basics by following the stages of the teaching module. Teachers used cognitive memory strategies with activity pictures pasted on the board. Students made vocabulary notes in Indonesian and translated them into English, which helped them memorize vocabulary and improve comprehension. For writing skills, the approach was personalized or conducted in groups, making it easier to teach sentence construction.

T2-a also mentioned that:

“The strategy depends on the teacher. What is our strategy if the children have difficulty in learning English? We have to guide them, we give direction and teach about the general basics, introduce subjects, to be and others. Then we can also provide a fun learning strategy with hands-on activities. Like playing vocabulary, for example I write vocabulary or verbs using English on paper then I give a lot system. For example, students take a lot then read what is written on the paper and then translate it into Indonesian, some know some don't know the meaning, usually if they don't know they can ask their friends for help, so the class atmosphere becomes fun and students can also know some vocabulary.” [T2-a, February 18, 2025]

Based on the above statement, English learning strategies depended on the teacher's ability to guide struggling students, provide direction, and teach the basics. One of the fun learning strategies was hands-on practice, such as playing vocabulary games using the lot system.

In addition, a statement from T2-b revealed that:

“I in this second grade usually use a compensation strategy through a dictionary because using a dictionary can help students remember vocabulary and understand new words such as for example translating English stories into Indonesian if students use the internet or translate using google translate of course they just copy and glance at the sentence or word but different from using a dictionary students can find the meaning of the word slowly even though it takes a long time but it can give students to remember the vocabulary they are looking for, not only that but students can also improve their patience because learning new vocabulary and grammar, especially by using a dictionary, takes time and effort.” [T2-b, February 20, 2025]

Based on the above statement, T2-b usually used a strategy that involved using a dictionary because it helped students remember vocabulary and understand new words. Translating English stories into Indonesian with a dictionary was different from using Google Translate, which allowed students to simply copy and glance. With a dictionary, students looked up the meanings of words slowly, which took time but helped them remember the vocabulary.

In conclusion, there were several strategies implemented by the teachers to overcome the challenges in learning English, including dialog practice in pairs, basic English learning, cognitive memory strategies, hands-on practice using games, and vocabulary strategies through dictionaries. In addition, teachers also provided motivation so that students felt more confident in speaking English. With varied approaches and proper support, it was hoped that students could participate more actively and develop their English skills better.

3.2 Discussion

The data presented in the research findings are in line with the study objectives and are categorized into two main themes. These themes focus on the challenges faced in teaching English and the strategies applied to overcome these problems, especially in rural school environments. From the data findings described above, it is clear that teachers at Batuatas Island Junior High School still face many challenges, especially in rural areas. Based on the data analysis, some of the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English are, first, students have limited vocabulary, which hinders their ability to communicate well in English. In addition, students' difficulty in understanding the difference between spelling and pronunciation also complicates the learning process. This is in line with research conducted by Agus (2023), which found that limited understanding of English vocabulary can affect their ability

to speak and communicate in that language. The impact on pronunciation can also affect their ability to speak English. When students speak the language, they may have difficulty choosing the right words.

Secondly, the teachers also found that the lack of support from the family environment and students' low motivation led to a lack of interest in learning English. In addition, students also revealed that they are less interested in learning English because they think English is difficult, thus creating a big challenge in the learning process. In this situation, students feel uninspired to develop their English skills, even though these abilities are very important for their academic future. This statement is similar to that made by Harlina and Yusuf (2020) in their research, which states that parents in rural areas do not provide specific motivation for students to develop their learning abilities, especially those related to learning English. In addition, the assumption that English is a difficult subject makes them less interested in learning English.

Third, another challenge is that students often use local languages and Indonesian in their daily communication, resulting in a lack of English language practice, both in the school environment and outside of school. This condition hinders the mastery of English because students do not have sufficient opportunities to practice and apply the language skills they learn. As a result, students' English language skills tend to stagnate, and they become less confident in using the language in situations that require it. The statement is similar to the research conducted by Burhamzah et al. (2024) The results of their research show that the challenges faced are the unsupportive environment, in many rural areas English is rarely used in everyday life and students' behaviors, as they frequently rely on their local language, so students have few opportunities to practice and practice the language outside the classroom.

Fourth, the independent curriculum is not suitable for the conditions of remote area schools, especially with inadequate facilities which are a challenge for teachers to provide teaching to students. This is in line with research conducted by Nasution, (2023) which shows that teachers face a number of challenges when implementing an independent curriculum because there is no access to learning, which should be used to develop students' interests and talents. Teachers were also unable to use technology and implement assessment functions due to limited access.

Fifth, teachers also found that students did not have a strong foundation in English because it was not taught in primary school, making it difficult for students to understand junior high school lessons. This is in line with research conducted by Daar, (2021) which states that primary school students in rural areas do not get space to learn English. This situation has a further impact, namely elementary school students in the village have difficulty learning English when they are at the junior high school level. In addition, some elementary school students who are entrusted with participating in district-level competitions have difficulty working on English questions that they basically do not learn at school.

Sixth, limited access and media learning resources make it difficult for teachers to implement interactive learning methods. This is in line with research conducted by Widagdo, (2021) which shows that despite the importance of learning English, there are still challenges that teachers often face if they are in rural areas, of course, it is related to inadequate learning resources. The lack of authentic English learning resources is one of the most obvious challenges for students because ideally, when learning a new language, students should be exposed to, and interact with real-life materials that develop their skills and improve their language proficiency.

To overcome this challenge, teachers have adopted various strategies tailored to rural education conditions. Based on the data findings presented, the first strategy is practicing dialog in pairs in English lessons, the teacher starts with a session of imitating pronunciation together which aims to build students' basic skills in speaking. After that, students are divided into pairs to practice dialogues, where students who feel shy to speak are paired with more advanced friends. This approach not only creates a supportive atmosphere, but also increases the motivation of students who lack confidence, as they can learn directly from their friends while getting constructive feedback. In this way, students can practice without pressure and gradually improve their speaking ability. The statement is in accordance with research by Amin et al., (2023) which in his research shows the results of dialogue training activities provide benefits in the English language learning process of students, especially in training English speaking and listening skills. In addition, this dialogue activity sharpens the cognitive abilities of learners by involving and compiling contextual dialogue material.

Second, basic English learning strategies, when students do not have a strong foundation in English, it is important to start the learning process from scratch with a systematic and supportive

approach. Teachers provide effective strategies including the introduction of basic vocabulary and simple sentence structures through repetitive and contextualized exercises. This is in line with the viewpoint put forward by Mulyani et al., (2023) that in learning English, the most important material to be learned is the most basic material.

Third, the teacher-centered strategy of lecture, the Batuatas teachers found the lecture strategy to be an effective method for conveying basic information and important concepts in English because of the remote areas where facilities were still limited so the lecture method continued to be used. In this approach, the teacher acts as the main source of knowledge, explaining the material clearly and systematically, and providing relevant examples. This is in line with research conducted by Sangid & Muhib, (2019) which in their research further shows that the lecture strategy is used to disseminate information in a short time, explain difficult ideas, encourage learners to learn, present information in a certain way or complete it for special groups or to explain learning tasks.

Fourth, the teacher uses cognitive memory strategies with the media of activity pictures pasted on the board. Students make vocabulary notes in Indonesian and translate them into English, which helps them memorize vocabulary and improve understanding. In line with research conducted by Fentari, (2020) which shows that cognitive strategies are related to the learner's thinking power in processing teaching and learning materials. Referring also to the same research conducted by Holiday & Rodliyah, (2020) in his research he stated on the use of memory strategies, showing that students try to memorize words related to lessons in class to make it easier for them to understand learning material. In addition, memorizing words related to the lessons taught by the teacher helps him understand the text and passages as learning materials.

Fifth, hands-on practice using games, fun and effective learning strategies can be applied through hands-on practice, such as playing vocabulary using the lot system. In this activity, students are invited to draw papers containing English words, and they have to translate the words into Indonesian. This approach not only makes the learning process more interactive and entertaining, but also encourages students to actively participate and collaborate with their peers. Thus, students are more motivated to learn and remember new vocabulary. The statement is in line with research conducted by Rochmawan, (2023) who stated that the use of games as an approach to English language learning offers exciting potential to improve students' English language learning in the early stages of education. By considering the findings and challenges, educators can integrate games into their learning practices to create meaningful, engaging and effective learning experiences for students.

Sixth, compensation strategy through dictionary, the use of dictionary as a tool in English learning is very effective to help students remember vocabulary and understand new words. By accessing the dictionary, students can find the meaning, pronunciation, and examples of word usage in sentences, which enriches their understanding. In addition, translating stories from English into Indonesian provides an opportunity for students to practice applying the vocabulary they have learned in a wider context.

Based on the above statement, in line with research conducted by Mustikawati et al., (2023) shows that students who choose compensation strategies like learning activities that use a lot of media, so they can answer the problems they face with help. In addition, Astutik & Setyowati, (2023) in their research also showed that by looking for new vocabulary and the difficulty of students in understanding the meaning of vocabulary from various types of reading they read, they think that using a dictionary is the fastest, easiest, and accurate way. With the ability to learn English vocabulary quickly, students will also learn English quickly so that they can improve their abilities by being able to read international language books with various genres because they will get additional knowledge from various fields so that their lives are more prosperous.

4. Conclusion

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small, involving only four English teachers, which may limit the breadth of perspectives captured. Second, the research was conducted in a single geographical setting Batuatas Island so the findings reflect a highly specific rural and island context. Third, this study focused exclusively on teachers' perspectives; students' voices and learning outcomes were not directly examined. As a result, the findings primarily represent pedagogical challenges and strategies from the teachers' standpoint rather than a comprehensive classroom ecosystem.

Challenges in teaching English are common and inevitable in the socio-cultural context of English language teaching. Based on research findings and discussions, researchers can conclude that the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English in rural areas include: (1) students have limited vocabulary; (2) lack of support from the family environment and student motivation; (3) dominance of local and Indonesian languages; (4) inappropriate independent curriculum; (5) students do not have basic English (6) limited access and media learning resources. By understanding these challenges, teachers can practically design more effective strategies to improve students' English proficiency. Thus, this study empirically contributes to analyzing the strategies that teachers can implement to overcome the challenges of teaching English in rural areas. Some of the strategies proposed include: (1) paired dialog practice strategy; (2) basic English learning strategies; (3) Teacher-centered strategies, i.e. lectures; (4) cognitive memory strategy with picture media; (5) hands-on practice strategy using games; (6) Compensation strategy through dictionary. This study aims to improve teachers' understanding of the importance of adapting English teaching methods to the local context and to provide students with insight into the challenges of learning English, which can encourage them to be more active and motivated in the learning process.

Although this study was conducted in a single rural island context, the findings are transferable to other rural and remote areas in Indonesia, as well as to international contexts with similar characteristics, such as geographical isolation, limited educational infrastructure, and strong local language dominance. The challenges and strategies identified in this study can inform broader discussions on rural education support and EFL pedagogy in developing regions. From a policy perspective, the study highlights the need for differentiated educational policies that acknowledge contextual diversity rather than applying uniform standards across urban and rural schools.

5. References

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