

PROBLEMS IN LEARNING ENGLISH FACED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS IN MTS DARUL ULUM SURUH A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru bahasa Inggris di MTs Darul Ulum Suruh, sebuah sekolah menengah berbasis agama, dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi. Penelitian ini berfokus pada pemahaman bagaimana penekanan sekolah pada pendidikan agama, khususnya bahasa Arab, mempengaruhi pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menjawab dua pertanyaan utama: (1) Apa saja masalah yang dihadapi oleh guru bahasa Inggris di MTs Darul Ulum Suruh? dan (2) Apa solusi untuk masalah-masalah tersebut? Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan guru, observasi kelas, dan analisis dokumen yang relevan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan beberapa tantangan signifikan: keterbatasan sumber daya, seperti tidak adanya laboratorium *listening* dan bahan-bahan bahasa Inggris, keterbatasan kosakata bahasa Inggris siswa, dan persepsi budaya yang lebih memprioritaskan bahasa Arab dibandingkan bahasa Inggris. Tantangan-tantangan ini menghambat efektivitas pengajaran bahasa Inggris dan berkontribusi pada kurangnya keterlibatan siswa dalam mempelajari bahasa tersebut. Penelitian ini mengusulkan beberapa solusi untuk mengatasi masalah-masalah ini. Solusi tersebut mencakup peningkatan kesadaran di antara siswa dan komunitas sekolah tentang pentingnya bahasa Inggris dalam praktik, peningkatan akses ke sumber belajar, dan pengintegrasian bahasa Inggris ke dalam kegiatan sekolah sehari-hari bersama dengan bahasa Arab. Dengan menerapkan strategi-strategi ini, kualitas pendidikan bahasa Inggris di MTs Darul Ulum Suruh dapat ditingkatkan secara signifikan, sehingga mempersiapkan siswa dengan lebih baik untuk keterlibatan di tingkat global. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang pengajaran bahasa Inggris di konteks pendidikan berbasis agama, memberikan wawasan yang berharga bagi pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya pendekatan yang seimbang dalam pengajaran bahasa di sekolah agama, di mana pendidikan agama dan umum diberikan perhatian yang seimbang untuk memastikan perkembangan siswa yang menyeluruh.

Kata Kunci: Pengajaran bahasa Inggris, pendidikan berbasis agama, tantangan dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris, bahasa Arab vs. Inggris, sumber daya pendidikan.

Abstract

This study explores the challenges faced by English teachers at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh, a religious-based secondary school, using a phenomenological approach. The research focuses on understanding how the school's emphasis on religious education, particularly Arabic, impacts English instruction. The study seeks to answer two main questions: (1) What are the problems faced by English teachers at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh? and (2) What are the solutions to these problems? Data were collected through in-depth interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and analysis of relevant documents. The findings highlight several significant challenges: limited resources, such as the absence of listening labs and English language materials, students' restricted English vocabulary, and cultural perceptions that prioritize Arabic over English. These challenges hinder the effectiveness of English teaching and contribute to a lack of student engagement in learning the language. The study suggests several solutions to address these issues. These include raising awareness among students and the school community about the practical importance of English, increasing access to learning resources, and incorporating English into daily school activities alongside Arabic. By implementing these strategies, the quality of English education at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh could be significantly improved, better preparing students for global engagement. This research contributes to the understanding of English language teaching in religious-based educational contexts, providing insights that are valuable for educators and policymakers. The findings emphasize the need for a balanced approach to language instruction in religious schools, where both religious and general education are given equal importance to ensure comprehensive student development.

Keywords: English language teaching, religious-based education, challenges in English instruction, Arabic vs. English, educational resources.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate in English is increasingly regarded as essential in a globalized world. English serves as a lingua franca in various domains, including education, business, and international diplomacy. However, the teaching and learning of English in non-native contexts present unique challenges, particularly in religious-based educational institutions like MTs Darul Ulum Suruh. This chapter provides an overview of the background that motivates the study, highlighting the specific context of English language instruction at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh and the challenges faced by English teachers in this setting.

1.1 The Importance of English in Education

English has become the global language of communication, and proficiency in English is often linked to academic and professional success. In Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject in the national curriculum, and students are expected to develop adequate language skills to compete in both local and international arenas. However, the effectiveness of English instruction varies across different types of educational institutions, influenced by factors such as resources, teacher qualifications, and institutional priorities.

1.2 The Context of MTs Darul Ulum Suruh

MTs Darul Ulum Suruh is a religious-based secondary school that places a strong emphasis on Islamic studies. The institution's curriculum is designed to balance religious education with general subjects, including English. However, the school's primary focus on Arabic, as the language of religious instruction, often overshadows the importance of English. This creates a unique context where English teachers face specific challenges in delivering effective language instruction.

English teachers at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh encounter several challenges that hinder the effective teaching and learning of English. These challenges include a lack of resources, such as listening labs and English language books, and the limited English vocabulary of students, who are more accustomed to Arabic. Additionally, there is a cultural perception within the school that English is less relevant compared to Arabic, which is seen as the language of the afterlife. This perception further complicates the teachers' efforts to motivate students to engage with English language learning.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the understanding of English language teaching in religious-based educational settings, which are often under-researched. Second, the findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for improving English instruction at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh, thereby enhancing the overall quality of education at the institution. Finally, the study offers insights that could be applicable to similar educational contexts, helping to inform policy and practice in the broader field of English language education.

The challenges faced by English teachers at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh are multifaceted and deeply rooted in the institution's cultural and educational context. By exploring these challenges through a phenomenological lens, this study seeks to uncover

the underlying issues and propose actionable solutions that can improve English language teaching and learning in this unique setting. The following chapters will delve into the specific problems encountered by the teachers and the strategies that can be employed to overcome them

2. METODE

In this research, the researcher employed descriptive qualitative research to collect and analyze the data in this study. The researcher solely described the outcome via interview.

According to Moleong (2007) Descriptive qualitative research involves observing and understanding natural phenomena, which can encompass a wide range of subjects, including behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions. It achieves this understanding through a holistic approach, leveraging a variety of natural methods. Descriptive qualitative research falls under the category of analytic research that does not involve numerical calculations. This is precisely why the researcher opted for a descriptive qualitative approach to both gather and analyze the data. The research is centered on "Problems in Learning English Faced by English teacher in MTs Darul Ulum Suruh"

The researcher needs to get the data from English teachers at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh. The researcher wants to know about the problems in learning English faced by English teachers at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh. To carry out this study, this research attempts to analyze the interview transcript, and then the researcher provides the conclusion from the data analysis.

The subjects of the study are two English teachers at in MTs Darul Ulum Suruh. The object of the research is English teacher in MTs Darul Ulum Suruh and interview the problems in learning English faced by English teacher in MTs Darul Ulum Suruh. The data for this research is the interview transcript. The data is from the problems in learning English faced by English teachers in MTs Darul Ulum Suruh. Participants in this research are the English teachers in MTs Darul Ulum Suruh.

In this research, the researcher adopted the framework developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) to delineate the key stages of data analysis, which encompass data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In this study, the researcher will conduct a comprehensive analysis of all collected data, employing both

complete data reduction and data display to ensure that the compiled data provides a clear path for solving the identified problem.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Discussion

There are two objectives in this research, they are: (1) To describe the problems of problems faced by English teachers in MTs Darul Ulum Suruh. (2) To describe the solutions employed by teachers to address teachers' problems The subject of the study were two English teachers of MTs Darul Ulum Suruh. The researcher collected the data by interview.

The findings are the results you've obtained in your research that are directly linked to the questions you were investigating during the course of your study (Pater Flom, 2018). The findings were obtained through analyzing the data from interviews and documentation about the problems and solutions of English teacher in MTs darul Ulum Suruh. In this chapter, the researcher uses the perspective of English teachers.

3.1.1 The students lack of understanding about the material.

Some students do not receive proper teaching since primary school continues until secondary school. Resulting in many students lacking a strong foundation in the English language, causing difficulty in learning English, according to the following data:

Data 1:

“That most students do not understand the lessons; the more they learn grammar, the less they understand. We must admit that our students have relatively poor basic English, as they lay the groundwork for bad language from the start.” (Appendix Number 1)

Based on the information provided by the teacher, it was evident that the majority of high school students have difficulty understanding English lessons, particularly those related to grammar. This is mainly due to the students' weak foundation in English.

Data 2:

“Besides that, many students here don't have a goal for learning English. They do not know what to study for or where to use it. The students here lack the enthusiasm to learn English.” (Appendix Number 4)

Based on the statement above, it can be observed that the majority of high school students lack interest and enthusiasm in learning English. This is primarily because students do not have a clear purpose or goal for their English learning. They are unaware of how learning English can be beneficial and applicable in real-life contexts.

When students lack a sense of purpose, they may struggle to find relevance and motivation in their English studies. They may question the practicality and utility of acquiring English skills, as they are unsure of where they can actually apply them.

Data 3:

“The majority of students cannot read English, even simple words. The student's inability to keep up with the lesson content leads to a lack of understanding of the lesson.” (Appendix Number 6)

Based on the statement, it was explained that the problems faced by high school students who struggle to understand the content of their English lessons prevent them from fully comprehending all aspects of the English language. This lack of understanding has an impact on their overall knowledge of the subject.

Furthermore, the teachers have reported that there are many high school students who are unable to read English, even when it comes to simple vocabulary words. This situation poses another challenge and adds to the difficulties faced by students in their English language learning.

Data 4:

“The next problem is that the teaching curriculum does not align with the foundation that the students have. If we adhere to the curriculum, we must concentrate on grammar, which, we must agree, is challenging for the student to comprehend. Unless the students genuinely like learning English” (Appendix Number 8)

Based on the statement above, it was shown that the problems associated with the current English language curriculum and teaching methods. The teaching approach used in this curriculum does not align with the existing knowledge and foundation of the students, making it challenging for them to understand the content of the lessons,

especially the grammar-focused materials. Except for those who genuinely have an interest in learning English, they may excel despite these challenges.

The current curriculum may not be suitable for the students' needs and existing levels of proficiency. Placing excessive emphasis on grammar alone can make learning difficult for students who lack a strong foundation in English.

Data 5:

“The fact that students do not recognize the importance of learning English is yet another issue. Maybe by learning English at school, students will only be able to read and write. Make the students unmotivated to want to learn English.” (Appendix Number 11)

Based on the statement above, it was shown that the English language education provided in schools predominantly focuses on reading and writing skills. However, this narrow focus fails to capture students' interest and does not provide enough motivation for them to actively engage in learning English. As a consequence, students become disinterested and fail to recognize the significance of studying English. Suggests that a lack of compelling motivation leads to apathy and a lack of understanding regarding the importance of English language learning in the future.

The current teaching methods, primarily centered on reading and writing, are not captivating enough to make students genuinely interested in learning English, which ultimately results in them neglecting its importance.

3.1.2 The limited number of teachers.

Teachers are highly important in education because they play a crucial role in the development and promotion of students' learning. Therefore, it can be challenging for English language teaching to be highly effective when there are a limited number of teachers, as shown by the following data:

Data 1:

“Some teachers lack English proficiency. Some teachers have difficulty communicating with their students, and their teaching is also not good. Some teachers do not analyze students because the first thing a teacher should do before beginning to teach is analyze the students and determine their level of English foundation.” (Appendix Number 2)

Based on the statement above, it was shown that schools lack an adequate number of qualified personnel proficient in teaching the English language. This can be seen in teachers who are unable to effectively communicate with students or even analyze students to adapt teaching methods suitable for their needs. When a school lacks personnel with these abilities, it can lead to issues in communication and teaching methods that are not suitable for students' English foundations.

Data 2:

“In this school, the teaching materials are not good. There are no electronic media used in teaching and learning, such as a computer, a projector, etc., including a language laboratory. Given the limitations of the media, teaching and learning are not effective.” (Appendix Number 3)

Based on the statement above, it was evident that there are limitations in the teaching media available for English instruction. The school lacks English laboratories for students and does not provide teachers with computers and projection devices to support their teaching. These limitations in teaching resources contribute to the inefficiency of learning and teaching English.

Data 3:

“The next is that there are not enough teachers. Now that we only have two English teachers, we cannot separate class rooms according to the students' knowledge base because there are not enough teachers.” (Appendix Number 7)

Based on the statement, it was clear that the shortage of personnel has led to a situation where students are unable to learn according to their individual knowledge levels. The insufficient number of teachers available to address the diverse needs of students. When there is a shortage of teachers, it becomes challenging to provide personalized instruction and support to students with different levels of knowledge and abilities. Some students may require additional assistance or advanced materials, while

others may need more foundational instruction. Without enough teachers to cater to these varying needs, students may struggle to progress effectively in their learning.

Data 4:

“And on each teacher's part, they have duties besides teaching as well. Sometimes teachers do not have enough time to prepare lesson plans because they waste their time managing other school tasks, which in this respect is inevitable.” (Appendix Number 9)

Based on the statement above, it was shown that teachers have responsibilities beyond teaching, which leads to less time available for lesson planning. When teachers have additional responsibilities, such as administrative tasks, meetings, or extracurricular activities, it can significantly impact the time they have to prepare and plan for their lessons. Insufficient time for lesson planning can result in less effective instruction and a lack of proper alignment with students' needs and curriculum objectives.

Data 5:

“And there are still limitations in terms of equipment or media that will be used in teaching. Media play a large role in developing students' skills. But the school is not available. Teachers need to find as many materials as possible to supplement their teaching, which is not good enough to improve the students' English.” (Appendix Number 10)

Based on the statement above, it can be observed that the school lacks the necessary resources to develop students' English skills. Teachers are required to seek supplementary teaching materials to the best of their abilities. However, due to the limited number of teachers, the available materials may not be diverse enough to effectively enhance students' English proficiency.

3.1.3 Implementing various teaching methods.

Effective teaching with structured methods and approaches promotes the development of knowledge and skills in students in various areas. Using interesting and engaging teaching methods that present content in an engaging manner helps students become enthusiastic about learning and fosters creativity in understanding the content.

Teaching that aligns with students' needs and learning styles enhances the efficiency of learning. Students who can learn in a manner that suits their preferences and styles tend to perform better, as the following data indicates:

Data 1:

“Encourage students to be more receptive to the language by explaining the advantages of learning the English language and making adjustments to the teaching methods to be continuous and suitable for the students' knowledge. This will increase understanding for the students beyond just studying.” (Appendix Number 5)

Based on the statement above, it can be understood that teachers should adapt their teaching methods to suit each individual student in order to maximize their understanding of the lessons. It is also mentioned that explaining the benefits of learning English can help students visualize and recognize the importance of English language learning, ultimately motivating them to be more receptive to learning English.

By personalizing the teaching approach, teachers can cater to the diverse needs, learning styles, and abilities of students. This may involve using different instructional strategies, resources, or materials to engage students effectively. By considering the individual strengths and weaknesses of students, teachers can provide targeted support and tailor their instruction to optimize comprehension and learning outcomes.

Additionally, highlighting the advantages of learning English can inspire students and make them aware of the practical and lifelong benefits associated with English proficiency.

Data 2:

“Organizing activities related to the language should be designed to match the students' abilities and focus on using English in real life.” (Appendix Number 12)

Based on the statement above, it is explained that developing English skills by organizing language-related activities to promote students' learning of English outside the classroom, considering the abilities of each student. This could involve incorporating

vocabulary enrichment through activities or games, practicing pronunciation, constructing sentences, and applying them in daily life.

Data 3:

“Teachers should also be models for using English, using both English and Indonesian in the classroom with simple vocabulary” (Appendix Number 13)

Based on the information provided by the teacher, it was evident that teachers should use both English and Indonesian languages in the classroom during teaching and learning activities. It emphasizes starting with simple vocabulary words.

By incorporating both languages, teachers aim to create a supportive learning environment where students can understand and communicate effectively. Starting with basic vocabulary allows students to build a foundation and gradually expand their language skills. Additionally, focusing on listening skills helps students develop their ability to comprehend English.

In the discussion, the researcher focuses on the findings of the two research questions. They are about the problems of English learning faced by English Teacher in MTs Darul Ulum Suruh and the solutions employed by teachers to address students' problems. The discussions are described below:

3.2 The problems of English Learning Faced by English Teacher In MTs Darul Ulum Suruh

The results of the interviews with English teachers at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh revealed the problem of learning English for English teacher. It consists of three main problems: the students lack of understanding of the material and the limited number of teachers and Facilities.

Firstly, the problem faced by English teacher in learning English at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh was their lack of understanding of the material. Due to a weak foundation, the teaching approach used in this curriculum does not align with the existing knowledge and foundation of the students, making it challenging for them to understand the content of the lessons.

Currently, the English language curriculum used in the schools of three southern border provinces does not align with the genuine needs of society. It does not support students' learning effectively, fails to foster their learning adequately, and does not serve

as an efficient and effective teaching tool for students. This is due to the fact that many subjects within the curriculum still lack significant relevance to the local context. This aligns with the report on the English language teaching reform strategy aimed at enhancing the competitiveness. It specifically identifies one of the problems in English language education as the development of the curriculum, school management, and teaching methods not being in line with the actual situation (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Secondly, the finding revealed that the limited number of teachers is considered another factor that affects students' English learning. The scarcity of personnel, particularly the lack of adequately qualified individuals proficient in teaching English, diminishes the overall teaching ability. This is consistent with Praty, Sorat, and Sharfuddin's (2018) research, which demonstrates that the problem on the teacher's side of English instruction is multifaceted. Some English instructors may not have direct qualifications in English.

Furthermore, the teachers have duties outside of teaching, which means they have less time for lesson planning. A lesson plan is a necessary tool for preparing to teach. Teachers create lesson plans in advance for each subject, researching the content to be taught as well as examining the curriculum and learning objectives. But teachers frequently have several responsibilities in schools, with apparently endless administrative tasks. Teachers may find themselves juggling multiple responsibilities with limited time to prepare for teaching, which can contribute to decreased teaching efficiency (Jedsarid, Kettawa, and Wantana, 2015).

Apart from that, facilities that support the creation of English language learning are also still lacking, such as language labs, teaching materials, large-scale dictionaries in libraries are also still a problem faced.

The most critical role in managing English teaching is the teacher. Therefore, teachers must understand the principles of teaching management. It is evident that teachers play a pivotal role in the classroom environment (Praty, Sorat, and Sharfuddin, 2018). The success of a school depends on the role of teachers in the classroom, where they should be active teachers. In contrast, in any school where teachers lack a commitment to learning or self-improvement, they are unable to stimulate students to develop all the time. Students tend to have lower achievement in schools where teachers

are passive, compared to schools with teachers committed to learning (Wenglinsky, 2001).

3.3 The solutions employed by teachers to address students' problems

Based on the research conducted, the solutions employed by teachers to address students' problems in learning English are implementing various teaching methods include organizing language-related activities to encourage English learning outside the classroom, and incorporating both English and Indonesian languages during teaching and learning activities within the classroom. Using a variety of teaching approaches is essential for engaging students and improving their learning experiences.

To maximize students' comprehension of the lessons, teachers should customize their teaching approaches to each individual student's learning style and needs. According to Tisna (2000), In teaching, teachers can employ various methods and select them based on their appropriateness for the students, the particular context, and the environment at hand. Teaching through lectures alone is not sufficient. Teachers must incorporate a variety of teaching methods and techniques to effectively manage the teaching and learning process.

Teaching methods are tools that promote the learning of students. According to Kulisara (2019), whether learners achieve success or not depends on the teaching process. If teachers choose effective teaching methods, it will help foster the development of knowledge and skills in the learning of students, including students who can get better at understanding material.

4. CLOSING

Based on the data analysis and discussion in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded that the problems of English teacher in learning English at MTs Darul Ulum Suruh are the students lack of understanding about the material, and the limited number of teachers and facilities. The students' lack of understanding of the material is due to a weak foundation, coupled with a teaching approach that does not align with their existing knowledge and foundation, including the scarcity of teachers, especially the shortage of qualified individuals, is a problem and one of the barriers to learning English.

Then the solutions employed by teachers to address students' problems in learning English include implementing various teaching methods. Using a variety of teaching

approaches and adapting their teaching methods to suit each individual student will help their understanding of the lessons and promote the development of knowledge and skills in students in various areas.

In addition, the teaching process determines whether or not students succeed. When teachers use effective teaching methods, it helps students build knowledge and abilities in their learning, including pupils who can improve their understanding of material.

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