

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Proficiency in English has become essential in many areas, such as international communication, finance, and education. English as a foreign language is emphasized by the Indonesian government in the national curriculum, especially to help students get ready for difficulties throughout the world. English language ability is regarded as a critical skill that facilitates global communication, learning, and career prospects (Isadaud et al., 2022).

The government's dedication to provide students with the language and cultural resources required to engage in a globalized society is demonstrated by this policy. However, students have limited access to quality educational resources, including English language learning materials, in remote areas like Desa Lonthoir in Banda Neira, Maluku. Low levels of student involvement in studying English have resulted from this situation, which has an impact on their academic performance and motivation.

As part of a volunteer program in Desa Lonthoir in January 2025, the researcher got the chance to teach at the village's primary junior high school, SMP Negeri 94 Maluku Tengah. This study was carried out during the researcher's participation in NusaXplore #2 Banda Neira, a community service program organized by Yayasan Jejak Langkah Nusantara, a non-governmental organization (NGO) focusing on community empowerment and educational

development. There are 64 students at the school, with just one class each grade. The school only has one English teacher, who started teaching there two years ago after finishing her studies in Jakarta.

Due to a lack of qualified employees, the school had not provided English education for a number of years previous to her arrival. The teacher states that the reason why learning English is still challenging is because the majority of students are exposed to the language in seventh grade without any prior primary school understanding. Students also have difficulties with fundamental abilities like conducting short phrases and identifying the sounds of the English letter.

Another level of complexity is added by the present curriculum, which is divided between Kurikulum 2013 for ninth grade and Kurikulum Merdeka for seventh and eighth grade. Aligning instructional strategies, resources, and evaluation criteria has become difficult as a result of this dual implementation (Puad & Ashton, 2023). These differences frequently result in unequal learning outcomes and more effort for teachers at remote schools who have to adjust to different curriculum. This is particularly true for a single teacher overseeing a range of student abilities.

To address these problems, the researcher introduced an experiential learning strategy in English lessons. Rather of depending on useless textbooks, students participated in practical activities including word games, correctly pronouncing English songs, creating "dream trees" to represent their goals, and giving short group presentations. Although some students were nervous

because of inadequate self-confidence and a fear of making errors, these engaging, real-life activities helped enhance students' excitement and engagement. In settings with limited resources, experiential learning may be an appropriate substitute, as indicated by the majority of students' positive feedback. According to (Putri & Dewi, 2025), students in limited resources classrooms seek practical learning activities that relate classroom subject to real-life situations. Such techniques encourage cooperation and creativity even when access to technical or instructional materials is limited, making experiential learning an attractive choice for remote and disadvantaged schools.

Learning through experience, or experiential learning, is one strategy that has been proven to be successful in promoting student involvement in the learning process, which is crucial. According to (Quibrantar & Ezezika, 2023), experiential learning allows students to develop understanding through reflection, interaction, and direct practice, resulting in deeper cognitive and emotional involvement. This strategy not only enhances comprehension, but it also gives students more autonomy and confidence in language acquisition.

Based on David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), experiential learning is a dynamic method that stresses learning via direct experience. According to this idea, learning a language effectively requires a cyclical process of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and applying information (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). By actively involving students in real-world projects, activities, and experiences, this approach enables them to learn by doing rather than just by listening.

Similar to several studies, experiential learning can improve language skills development (Kim & Kim, 2021), comprehension in real-world language situations (Zhuang, 2023), and engagement (Li, 2023). Few studies have explicitly examined how well this approach works in isolated places like Desa Lonthoir, where accessibility, social circumstances, and cultural norms are different from those in cities. This study is primarily focused on filling this research gap.

This study is especially important for Desa Lonthoir, where the majority of students have little access to a variety of media and learning strategies. It is believed that by using the experiential learning strategy, students would find the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable, which will increase their interest in learning English. Students that engage in experiential learning activities, including role-playing, storytelling, or project-based work, frequently show increased motivation and excitement for their studies (Putri & Dewi, 2025). This approach enhances overall English competence and maintains long-term engagement by connecting classroom activities to students' real-world experiences. Additionally, it is anticipated that this strategy would provide teachers and school officials new perspectives on how to design a more flexible and inclusive learning environment that accommodates students in remote areas.

In the Qur'an, the concept of learning through experience and observation is mentioned in several verses. For example, Surah Al-Mulk, verse 15, states:

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذُلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ ﴿١٥﴾

This verse encourages humans to learn through exploration and experience, a principle that aligns with experiential learning, where students are encouraged to gain knowledge directly through their involvement in the learning process.

The aim of this study is to examine how students in Desa Lonthoir engage in experiential learning activities in English classes. In addition to identifying the challenges students encountered in a remote educational setting, it examined how experiential learning affected students' engagement, enthusiasm, and acquisition of language. By emphasizing student interaction, the study sought to shed light on effective teaching techniques that could improve language competency and active participation. The results were expected to create more approachable and interesting English learning settings, helping students become more competent and confident English speakers. Furthermore, the findings provided a foundation for enhancing English proficiency in Indonesia's isolated areas.

B. Definition of Key Terms

1. English Language Engagement

English Language Engagement describes how involved, focused, and excited students are in the process of learning the language. When students actively participate in learning activities, it shows that they are emotionally,

behaviorally, and cognitively engaged. It is anticipated that more engagement would increase students' drive to acquire and become proficient in English.

2. Experiential Learning

Experiential learning in this study include exercises that provide students practical, exploratory, and project-based assignments which connect theory to actual practice. Through practical experience, this approach enables students to gain knowledge, which is expected to increase their enthusiasm and involvement in studying English.

3. Remote Area

A geographical location with restricted access to educational resources, technology, and transportation is referred to as a remote place in this research. The research site, Desa Lonthoir in Banda Neira, Maluku is one such remote area. Due to a lack of resources and accessibility, students in this area have specific difficulties getting an education, especially when it comes to learning English.

C. Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do students engage in English classroom activities through experiential learning?
2. What challenges do students encounter in implementing experiential learning in the remote setting of Desa Lonthoir?

D. Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine how students engage in English classroom activities through experiential learning.
2. To identify the specific challenges students face when implementing experiential learning in the remote setting of Desa Lonthoir.

E. Significance of Study

There are several reasons why this study is important. First, it adds to the body of knowledge on experiential learning by examining how well it works to raise student engagement, particularly when it comes to learning English in remote areas like Desa Lonthoir. By concentrating on this particular context, the study fills a vacuum in the literature about teaching strategies that accommodate students with little financial means. Second, the results will be useful to educators and policymakers, giving them a better understanding of how to apply experiential learning techniques that are suited to the requirements of students in remote areas. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide a more welcoming and stimulating learning environment while enhancing educational results for students in Desa Lonthoir and similar environments.