

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

In contemporary times, English has achieved global prominence, encouraging individuals around the world to actively engage in its use. As an international language, English serves not only as a medium of communication among people from different countries but also as a bridge for accessing science, technology, education, business, and global information. In the era of globalization and rapid technological development, English proficiency has become increasingly important because many academic references, digital platforms, international journals, and technological innovations are predominantly presented in English. Individuals with strong English skills tend to have wider opportunities in higher education, employment, and international communication. Therefore, the objectives of learning English encompass both international and local purposes (Gunantar, 2016). Internationally, English enables individuals to compete and communicate globally, while locally it supports academic success, professional development, and social mobility.

In Indonesia, English is classified as a foreign language and is considered essential for students to learn. To enhance the quality of human resources, the government has established English as a compulsory subject taught from elementary school through university level (Sayuri, 2016). Through English education, students are expected to develop communicative competence that can

support their future academic and professional lives. English learning also plays a significant role in preparing Indonesian students to face global competition in education and employment. Consequently, English teachers hold an important responsibility in facilitating effective language learning and helping students develop the competencies needed in modern society.

Students are expected to develop proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Mastery of these four language skills enables individuals to communicate effectively in English, both actively and passively. Listening helps students understand spoken language and develop comprehension skills, while speaking enables them to express ideas and interact verbally. Reading allows learners to gain information, broaden their knowledge, and access various academic resources, whereas writing supports the ability to communicate ideas clearly in written form. These four skills are interconnected and should be developed in balance to achieve effective language learning outcomes. Therefore, English teachers are required not only to teach language knowledge but also to create meaningful learning experiences that actively engage students in communication and language practice.

English is taught in nearly all schools across Indonesia, including those located in remote and rural areas. Rural schools play an important role in ensuring educational equity and providing learning opportunities for students living far from urban centers. However, despite their important contribution to the national education system, schools in remote areas continue to face various educational inequalities. Infrastructure limitations such as inadequate teaching materials,

limited technological support, poor transportation access, unstable internet connections, restricted access to learning resources, and insufficient facilities remain major obstacles (Endriyati et al., 2019). In certain remote schools, teachers must conduct lessons with very limited media and often rely heavily on traditional teaching methods due to the absence of adequate technological support. Some schools even experience difficulties related to electricity access, classroom conditions, and limited textbook availability. These conditions inevitably affect the quality of English instruction and create additional burdens for teachers who must continuously adapt to difficult teaching environments.

In addition to physical and infrastructural limitations, teachers in remote areas also face various pedagogical challenges. Students in remote schools often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom because English is rarely used in their daily communication. As a result, students may perceive English as difficult, unfamiliar, and less relevant to their daily lives. Teachers frequently encounter students with low vocabulary mastery, difficulties in pronunciation, low confidence in speaking English, and limited motivation to practice the language. The absence of an English-speaking environment also reduces students' opportunities to apply what they learn in authentic situations. These conditions force teachers to develop creative teaching strategies to maintain students' engagement and motivation despite limited resources and challenging learning conditions.

Moreover, English teachers in remote areas may experience professional isolation due to limited access to teacher training, workshops, seminars, and

professional development programs. Compared to teachers in urban schools, teachers in remote settings often receive fewer opportunities to improve their pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills. This lack of professional support can affect teachers' confidence and instructional practices. Nevertheless, many teachers continue to demonstrate resilience, creativity, and dedication in carrying out their professional responsibilities. They adapt teaching methods, create self-made learning materials, and maximize the limited resources available in order to provide meaningful learning experiences for their students.

The issue of educational inequality between urban and remote areas remains an important concern in Indonesia. Although the government has implemented various educational policies to improve educational quality and access, disparities in infrastructure, facilities, and teacher support continue to exist. Students in remote areas often do not receive the same educational opportunities as students in urban schools. In the context of English language learning, this inequality becomes even more visible because effective English instruction often requires adequate learning media, technological support, and continuous language exposure. Therefore, understanding the lived experiences of English teachers in remote schools is important in order to identify the actual conditions, challenges, and needs faced by teachers working in geographically isolated areas.

Previous research has examined challenges faced in remote educational contexts. For example, a study conducted by Poedjiastutie (2021) explored the socio-cultural challenges of teaching English in remote areas of Indonesia. The findings revealed that economic constraints, community perceptions toward

English, limited exposure to the language, and curriculum mismatches significantly influenced classroom practices. Similarly, Galut (2025) investigated teachers' lived experiences in geographically isolated areas in the Philippines. The study identified issues such as accessibility difficulties, limited instructional resources, cultural adjustments, and lack of institutional support. Despite these obstacles, teachers demonstrated resilience and adaptability in fulfilling their professional responsibilities.

In addition, Fabrigas and Paglinawan (2025) explored teacher resilience in remote schools and found that teachers developed various coping mechanisms to deal with professional stress and environmental challenges. Likewise, Coletto (2025) examined teachers' experiences in underserved areas and emphasized the importance of emotional resilience, community relationships, and personal commitment in sustaining educational practices in difficult conditions. These studies collectively highlight that teaching in remote areas requires not only pedagogical competence but also emotional strength, adaptability, patience, and perseverance.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, several research gaps remain. Poedjiastutie's (2021) study primarily focuses on socio-cultural factors influencing English teaching, while Galut's (2025) research addresses teachers' lived experiences in a general context rather than specifically examining English teachers. Similarly, Fabrigas and Paglinawan (2025) and Coletto (2025) explore teacher resilience and experiences in remote schools but do not focus specifically on English language instruction or employ narrative inquiry as their methodological

framework. Furthermore, most previous studies used ethnographic, phenomenological, or descriptive approaches. As a result, limited attention has been given to exploring English teachers' personal stories in depth through narrative inquiry, particularly regarding how teachers interpret their experiences, construct meaning from challenges, and develop resilience while teaching in remote contexts.

Based on these gaps, this study seeks to explore the lived experiences of an English teacher working in a remote area through a narrative inquiry approach. Narrative inquiry is particularly suitable because it emphasizes personal stories and lived experiences as valuable sources of knowledge. According to narrative inquiry perspectives, individuals understand and give meaning to their experiences through stories. Therefore, through storytelling, teachers are able to express not only the events they experienced but also their emotions, reflections, values, struggles, and personal growth throughout their professional journeys. Through this approach, the researcher aims to understand not only the pedagogical and logistical challenges experienced by the teacher but also how the teacher interprets those experiences and develops adaptation strategies over time. By focusing on the participant's narratives, this study is expected to provide a rich and contextualized understanding of English teaching practices in geographically isolated areas.

In addition to academic considerations, the selection of this research topic is also grounded in the researcher's personal experience. The researcher had the opportunity to teach in a remote area for several days and directly experienced the limitations related to facilities, learning resources, transportation access, internet connectivity, and school conditions. During this experience, the researcher

observed how teachers struggled to manage classrooms with limited materials while still trying to maintain students' motivation and participation. The researcher also witnessed the dedication demonstrated by teachers who continued teaching despite difficult circumstances and limited support. This firsthand experience provided meaningful insight into the realities faced by teachers working in remote settings. It left a lasting impression and fostered a deeper sense of empathy and curiosity to further investigate how English teachers navigate and overcome such challenges in their professional lives.

This study is particularly significant for educational stakeholders and policymakers in the Kotabaru region. By understanding the lived experiences of English teachers in remote areas, educational institutions and policymakers may gain a clearer understanding of the actual conditions faced by teachers in geographically isolated schools. The findings of this study may contribute to the development of more relevant educational policies, improved teacher support systems, professional development programs, and more equitable resource allocation strategies. The study may also encourage greater attention toward improving educational facilities, technological access, and teacher welfare in remote schools. In addition, this study is expected to provide practical insights for future teachers who may later work in remote areas, helping them prepare mentally, pedagogically, and professionally for the realities of teaching in underserved educational settings.

From an academic perspective, this study also contributes to the development of narrative inquiry research in the field of English language teaching.

Research exploring English teachers' lived experiences in remote Indonesian contexts remains relatively limited, particularly studies employing narrative inquiry as the primary methodological approach. Therefore, this research is expected to enrich existing literature related to English teaching in remote areas, teacher resilience, teacher adaptation strategies, and narrative inquiry in educational research. Furthermore, the findings of this study may serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in investigating similar issues related to education in remote and underserved communities.

In Islam, the pursuit of knowledge is highly regarded as one of the most noble endeavors a person can undertake. Islam places great emphasis on education, learning, and the dissemination of knowledge as important aspects of human life. The Qur'an emphasizes the value of knowledge in Surah Az-Zumar verse 9:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only those of understanding will take heed.” (QS. Az-Zumar: 9)

This verse underscores the elevated status of knowledge and those who possess it. In the context of education, it serves as a reminder that the role of a teacher as someone who transmits knowledge carries profound moral and spiritual significance. Teachers, particularly those working in remote and underserved areas, embody this principle by continuing to educate students despite limited resources and challenging conditions. Their dedication reflects sincerity, responsibility, patience, and commitment in fulfilling their role as educators.

Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad SAW emphasized the importance of being beneficial to others through the hadith:

“The best of people are those who are most beneficial to others.” (HR. Ahmad)

This hadith directly reflects the spirit of this study. English teachers working in remote areas dedicate themselves to their students not only as a professional duty but also as a form of ibadah (worship) and service to others. Despite facing significant pedagogical and logistical challenges, they continue striving to deliver knowledge and make meaningful contributions to their students' lives. Their perseverance demonstrates values strongly emphasized in Islamic teachings, such as patience (sabr), sincerity (ikhlas), responsibility (amanah), and compassion toward others. Through education, teachers contribute not only to academic development but also to the moral and social development of society. Therefore, studying and appreciating the experiences of English teachers in remote areas is not only academically important but also socially and morally meaningful, as their work represents one of the most impactful forms of contribution to society.

B. Definition of Key Terms

To prevent confusion or misunderstanding, the definitions of the terms used in the thesis are included in this section. The key terms explained below give further limitation and dimension important to this study.

1. English Teachers

Teachers who teach English, particularly at the primary or secondary

education level, are the subjects of this study. They are responsible for teaching English reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to students.

2. Pedagogical Challenges

Difficulties that teachers face in terms of planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process. These include challenges such as lack of learning resources, limited professional training, or obstacles in implementing effective teaching strategies.

3. Logistical Challenges

Operational or technical barriers faced by teachers, such as limited access to teaching materials, inadequate school facilities, and transportation difficulties.

4. Remote Areas

Remote areas refer to regions that are geographically distant from urban centers, often characterized by limited access to infrastructure, transportation, technology, and educational resources. In the Indonesian context, remote areas are also associated with disparities in the quality of education compared to urban areas (Endriatni et al., 2019).

5. Adaptation

Adaptation refers to the process by which teachers adjust their teaching practices and strategies to cope with challenges in their teaching context. The characteristics of adaptation include flexibility in using available resources, creativity in designing learning activities, and resilience in maintaining teaching effectiveness despite limitations (Simmonds et al., 2015).

6. Resilience

Resilience refers to the ability of teachers to cope with, adapt to, and overcome challenges in their teaching environment. It involves maintaining motivation, commitment, and effectiveness despite facing various pedagogical and logistical difficulties. Resilient teachers demonstrate persistence, emotional strength, and problem-solving skills in responding to limited resources and demanding conditions, particularly in remote areas. This concept highlights how teachers sustain their professional roles and continue to support student learning even under challenging circumstances (Gu & Day, 2007).

C. Research Questions

In this research, the researcher has posed the following two research questions. The research questions are the main pillars in order to conduct this study.

1. What pedagogical & logistical challenges are faced by the English teacher in remote areas?
2. How does the teacher adapt to the challenges faced in teaching?

D. Objectives of Study

The followings are the objectives of this study. The objectives of study unwrap the main objectives to conduct this study

1. To identify the pedagogical and logistical challenges encountered by English teachers in remote areas.

2. To explore the strategies and adaptations employed by English teachers to overcome these challenges.

E. Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to provide the following significances. The significance of the study illustrates how this research contributes to the field and supports the understanding of English language teaching in remote areas.

1. For English Teachers, this study is expected to provide feedback and practical insights for English teachers, particularly those teaching in remote areas. It helps teachers understand the challenges they face in terms of pedagogical practices, limited resources, and student engagement. Additionally, the findings may serve as a source of motivation and inspiration for teachers to develop adaptive strategies and strengthen their resilience in teaching English under challenging conditions.
2. For future researchers, this study is expected to enrich the researcher's knowledge and experiences in conducting qualitative research, especially narrative inquiry. It also provides deeper understanding of English teaching practices in remote contexts, particularly related to teacher resilience and adaptation in facing pedagogical, logistical, and social challenges.