

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

In today's era, the importance of the English language cannot be underestimated. As noted, English is universally recognized as an international language. It plays a crucial role in providing individuals access to various opportunities, including finding meaningful employment, enriching travel experiences, and getting higher education. This global linguistic proficiency is a valuable asset in a highly interconnected world. In culturally rich countries like Indonesia, English goes beyond being a mere subject in the curriculum; it transforms into a crucial tool for equipping students with global language skills (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). The government also emphasizes the strategic importance placed on English proficiency, not just as an academic achievement but as a practical necessity for effective communication and global competitiveness.

The English language holds a crucial role as a subject at the secondary school level, supporting progress towards higher levels of education. In Indonesia, there are various types of secondary education, including public and private schools, as well as those affiliated with religious institutions like MTs. Unlike public junior high schools, Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) has a different curriculum that integrates Islamic studies, Arabic language, and Quranic studies (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2016). This means that the focus of learning in MTs is not primarily on sciences and technologies education but leans more towards religious education, such as the Quran and Hadith. This poses one of the challenges in teaching English, which is considered a science and technology education. Those challenges become an obstacle to achieving the goals of English language learning. Therefore, there is a need for research on the challenges of teaching English in this particular Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) (Dewi & Pratami, 2022).

Numerous studies have been conducted on the challenges of teaching English at the secondary school level, particularly in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs). Songbatumis (2017) conducted research at MTs Taliwang, the only MTs in that area, categorizing the difficulties of teaching English into three main issues: student-related, teacher-related, and facilities-related. This indicates that there are still considerable challenges faced by teachers in teaching English at MTs. Further research conducted by Utomo (2022) in Banjarnegara involved a study of one hundred English teachers in the city, revealing additional challenges in teaching English. The challenges faced by English teachers in teaching at a junior high school in Banjarnegara Regency include Lack of teaching material, teaching design, classroom management, ICT skills, and many teaching administration tasks; Limited facilities in schools, such as dictionaries, projectors, and language laboratories; and Students' lack of vocabulary, motivation, and engagement in the classroom. This aligns with informal interviews conducted before the research with one of the participants. In the interview, they mentioned that one of the challenges in teaching at MTs is the students' unfamiliarity with English. This is attributed to the fact that English is not taught in their previous education at elementary (SD) or Islamic elementary (MI) schools.

To broaden the understanding of the difficulties in teaching English, it is worth noting that Songbatumis' (2017) research was conducted at a public MTs. In contrast, the present researcher intends to investigate these challenges in private MTs. Additionally, Utomo's (2020) study was carried out in Banjarnegara, an urban area where challenges in teaching English were identified. Considering Mishra's (2015) assertion that rural areas lack good schools with suitable environments and affordability, catering to changing needs and expectations. The researcher aims to explore teaching difficulties in several private MTs in the Sadananya District, which is not considered an urban area.

This research on investigating these challenges in specific regional contexts is vital to developing targeted solutions that can enhance the quality of English language instruction and ultimately contribute to the improved language

proficiency of students, even in more remote areas like the Sadananya district in Ciamis Regency.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The present study addresses the research question, "What are the Challenges faced by English teachers in teaching English at MTs?"

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to this study, as follows:

1.3.1 MTs

MTs (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) is an educational institution that offers Islamic junior high school education, primarily focused on providing students with comprehensive knowledge of Islamic teachings, culture, and values alongside the national curriculum subjects.

1.3.2 Teaching English / English Teacher

An English teacher at MTs (Islamic Junior High School) is an educator responsible for facilitating the teaching and learning of the English language and related content to students in grades equivalent to junior high school level.

1.3.3 Teacher Challenges

Teacher challenges refer to specific obstacles, difficulties, and impediments faced by educators within the educational environment that directly impact their ability to effectively fulfill their instructional, administrative, and supportive roles.

1.4 Aim of the Study

The present study aims to investigate teacher's challenges in teaching English at MTs.

1.5 Significance of the Study

3.5.1 Theoretical Uses

This study contributes to the theoretical foundation of language education by examining the challenges faced by English teachers within the context of Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs). The findings can enrich theories related to language teaching methodologies (particularly classroom management) and the impact of cultural and religious contexts on language instruction.

The study within the context of MTs brings unique cultural and religious dimensions to the forefront. This can lead to theoretical insights into how these factors influence language education strategies and teaching practices, potentially contributing to cross-cultural pedagogical theories.

This study can inform theories surrounding pedagogical adaptation in religious educational settings. By identifying challenges specific to English teaching in MTs, the writer contributes to discussions on how pedagogical strategies can be adapted to meet the needs of these unique learning environments.

3.5.2 Empirical Uses

The empirical data from this study offers guidance for other educators and researchers working in similar Madrasah Tsanawiyah environments. They can draw parallels from the findings to understand common challenges and explore potential solutions that align with the specific cultural and educational context.

Researchers can use this study's empirical insights for cross-context comparisons, comparing challenges faced by English teachers in MTs with those in other religious or non-religious secondary schools. This can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of teaching challenges across different educational settings.

The empirical findings can influence curriculum development, not only in MTs but also in other religious schools. By highlighting challenges, this research can guide the inclusion of relevant topics, teaching methodologies, and resources that resonate with the cultural and religious values of the students.

3.5.3 Practical Uses

The practical implications of this study can guide teacher training and professional development programs in MTs. Educators can benefit from targeted training that addresses the specific challenges identified in this study, enhancing their ability to provide effective English instruction.

The study's findings can directly impact teaching practices by promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. By addressing challenges rooted in cultural and religious contexts, teachers can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for students.

The practical insights from this study can inform curriculum design within MTs. Curriculum developers can use the findings to tailor English language materials and approaches that align better with the unique context of MTs, enhancing both teaching and learning outcomes.

Ultimately, the practical implications of this research can lead to improved teaching practices and enhanced student learning outcomes. By addressing the challenges teachers face, this work contributes to the cultivation of effective pedagogy within MTs.