



## Challenges of Non-English Teachers and Students' Views on English Learning at SDN Cilaja 2

### *Tantangan Guru Non-Inggris dan Pandangan Siswa Tentang Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di SDN Cilaja 2*

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#### Abstrak

Studi ini menyelidiki tantangan yang dialami oleh guru non-bahasa Inggris dan mengeksplorasi perspektif siswa tentang pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di SDN Cilaja 2, sebuah sekolah dasar pedesaan di Provinsi Banten, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan tiga guru non-bahasa Inggris dan kuesioner yang didistribusikan kepada 52 siswa kelas IV dan V. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa guru menghadapi keterbatasan dalam kemahiran bahasa Inggris, kompetensi pedagogis, dan sumber belajar. Terlepas dari tantangan ini, mereka berusaha melibatkan siswa menggunakan strategi dasar seperti lagu, permainan, dan alat bantu visual. Siswa, di sisi lain, menunjukkan minat yang tinggi pada bahasa Inggris, terutama ketika kegiatan belajar bersifat interaktif dan menyenangkan. Namun, banyak yang berjuang untuk memahami materi dan merasa bingung karena metode pengajaran yang terbatas dan kurangnya instruksi khusus. Kesenjangan antara motivasi siswa dan pemahaman aktual mereka menggarisbawahi perlunya guru bahasa Inggris yang berkualitas dan pendekatan instruksional yang lebih baik di sekolah pedesaan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pengajaran bahasa Inggris yang efektif di tingkat dasar tidak hanya membutuhkan motivasi siswa tetapi juga persiapan guru yang memadai dan lingkungan belajar yang mendukung. Oleh karena itu, disarankan agar pemerintah menugaskan guru terlatih bahasa Inggris ke sekolah dasar dan memberikan pelatihan pedagogis bagi guru non-bahasa Inggris untuk meningkatkan kualitas pengajaran bahasa Inggris.

**Kata kunci:** Pendidikan dasar, Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, Guru non-spesialis.

#### Abstract

This study examines the challenges non-English teachers face and students' views on English learning at SDN Cilaja 2, an elementary school in a rural area of Banten Province, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with three non-English teachers, and questionnaires were distributed to 52 students in grades IV and V. The results showed that the teachers experienced limitations in English language mastery, pedagogical competence, and availability of learning resources. Despite this, they try to engage students through basic strategies such as songs, games, and visual media. On the other hand, students are highly interested in English lessons, especially when learning activities are interactive and fun. However, many students find it challenging to understand the material and feel confused due to the limited teaching methods and the absence of exceptional teachers. The gap between students' motivation and their ability to understand lessons underscores the importance of the presence of competent English teachers and a better teaching approach in rural schools. This study concludes that



effective English learning at the primary school level requires student motivation, teacher readiness, and a supportive learning environment. Therefore, it is recommended that the government place professional English teachers in primary schools and provide pedagogical training for non-specialist teachers to improve the quality of English language learning.

**Keywords : Basic education, English language learning, Non-specialist teachers**

## INTRODUCTION

English is an international language widely used in various fields, such as education, technology, communication, and international relations. Crystal (2003) states that English gained its status as a global language not because of its linguistic structure but because of its important role in various sectors of modern life and its wide distribution historically and socially. Realizing this, Indonesia began integrating English into the basic education system as an initial provision for the younger generation in facing global challenges. Teaching this language at the elementary school level is one of the strategic steps in instilling the foundation of English skills from an early age so that students can compete in the future. Emphasized that the approach to English introduction from an early age has proven more effective than learning in adolescence because children absorb the language faster and build confidence in using it. Susanty et al. (2021) emphasized that the approach to English introduction from an early age has proven to be more effective than learning in adolescence, as children absorb the language faster and build confidence in using it.

However, idealism about the importance of English from an early age has not been fully reflected in learning practices, especially in rural areas. Implementing learning in elementary schools in these areas still faces multiple challenges. One of the main obstacles is the position of English, which is only positioned as local content, so it does not receive optimal attention from schools and curriculum designers. On the other hand, teachers assigned to teach these subjects often do not have a background in language education, so they experience limitations in mastering effective teaching methods. This condition is exacerbated by low professional competence, which impacts the quality of material delivery. As revealed by Shan and Abdul Aziz (2022), weak pedagogical skills and limited professional training make it difficult for teachers to implement the right learning strategies and approaches for students in remote areas. The gap between urban and rural schools also exacerbates the situation: students in urban areas generally have adequate access to learning facilities and parental support, while students in rural areas often lack encouragement and motivation to learn (Sekar Pramesty et al., 2022). This leads to a stark difference in academic achievement, especially in English-speaking communication skills

Several previous studies have examined barriers to English language learning, particularly among non-native speakers. Alrashdi (2023) researched English learning in Saudi Arabia's primary schools and found barriers such as a lack of teacher readiness, limited facilities, and low student interest due to an unattractive curriculum. In Indonesia, Fitriah Tamimi (2021) found that non-English speaking students in Aceh experienced obstacles such as low learning motivation, limited vocabulary, and unsupportive teaching methods. Meanwhile, Oktavia et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of creative approaches, such as games and songs, in teaching English to children to keep them engaging and fun. Herizal et al. (2023) also revealed six significant challenges English teachers face in remote areas of Sumatra, including limited media, limited learning time, and lack



of school support. Despite their significant contributions, these studies have not fully touched the context of teaching in rural primary schools by non-English teachers.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that although various studies have addressed challenges in learning English at different levels and contexts, it is still rare to find studies examining how non-English teachers teach English in rural primary schools. In addition, little research has raised students' viewpoints as an important part of the learning process. Students' perspectives can provide a real picture of the effectiveness of learning and the impact of the teaching limitations they experience. Therefore, a study is needed that examines two sides at once, namely the challenges faced by non-English teachers and students' views on English learning in the context of rural elementary schools such as at SDN Cilaja 2.

Based on the background that has been presented, this study aims to examine more deeply the learning of English by non-English teachers in rural elementary schools. Therefore, the problem in this study is formulated as follows: What are the challenges faced by non-English teachers in teaching English at SDN Cilaja 2? Moreover, how do students view English learning provided by non-English teachers at the school? By answering these questions, this research can provide a clearer picture of the real condition of English learning in the region and be a consideration for schools, educators, and researchers in improving the quality of English teaching at the elementary level.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the challenges faced by non-English teachers and students' views on English learning at SDN Cilaja 2. The research location was chosen purposively because the school did not have a dedicated English teacher, so learning was carried out by teachers from other fields. The selection of this location also takes into account the reality that is common in elementary schools in areas with limited teaching staff, especially for English subjects. A qualitative approach is appropriate for uncovering subjective experiences and social dynamics in natural contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007)

This study uses tools such as semi-structured interview guidelines, closed questionnaires, observation sheets, and field notes as the main instruments in data collection. In addition, tools such as voice recorders are also used to document interviews, as well as notebooks for recording and processing data. The research subjects consisted of three non-English teachers who taught English, namely teachers from grades IV, V, and VI, as well as several students from grades IV and V. The number of students involved was 52 people, consisting of 30 students in grade IV and 22 students in class V.

Data was collected through two main techniques: semi-structured interviews and questionnaire distribution. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility in exploring participants' views and experiences (Pratiwi & Sekar, 2024) This method is also effective for balancing the structure of the question with the spontaneity of the answers so that it can produce richer and more contextual data (Busetto et al., 2020) Meanwhile, questionnaires capture students' perceptions of the English learning process they experience with non-specialist teachers.

Data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model from Miles & Huberman (1994), which consisted of three main components: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion



drawing and verification. These three stages were carried out simultaneously and continuously to ensure the findings were relevant and meaningful to the research focus.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The data in this study was analyzed with a thematic approach following the interactive analysis model of Miles & Huberman (1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This process is done iteratively from the beginning of data collection to the final interpretation stage to ensure that each emerging theme truly reflects the context and reality.

The study results were obtained through semi-structured interviews with three non-English teachers and a closed-ended questionnaire filled out by 52 grades IV and V students. The analysis produced several key themes that illustrate the challenges faced by non-specialist teachers in teaching English and students' perceptions of the learning process. The results are presented as direct excerpts from the transcript of the teacher's interview and the student questionnaire results recapitulation table.

### **Analysis of Teacher Interviews**

Interviews with three homeroom teachers (grades IV, V, and VI) at SDN Cilaja 2 produced important information about non-English teachers' English learning conditions. Based on the results of the thematic analysis, five main themes emerged from the interview: students' interest in English, challenges in teaching, the influence of teachers' backgrounds, strategies used in teaching, and teachers' expectations for English learning in elementary school. These five themes are explained in the following subsections to provide a clearer picture of the conditions of English learning at SDN Cilaja 2:

#### **1. Students' Interest in English Learning**

Based on interviews, the three teachers stated that, in general, students have a good interest in learning English. The IV teacher said, "Their interest in English is high because they want to learn English often." The teacher of grade V said, "The interest is outstanding because the support resources are already there, such as books and games; only the teacher is not there." However, the grade VI teacher said that the student's interest was uneven, "the most prominent was only one, two or three."

This shows that students' motivation to learn is relatively high, especially when there is a fun learning medium. Demirbulak and Zeyrek (2022) emphasized that student participation increases significantly when media such as color visuals and videos are used in class, while interest decreases when only using colorless books. However, this enthusiasm has not been optimally facilitated because there are no special teachers and limited lesson time. High interest without adequate teaching support risks declining over time. When students do not get enough opportunities to explore English in meaningful and ongoing classroom activities, the potential for such interests does not develop to its full potential. This shows the need for a more structured and consistent learning system so that students' initial interests can continue to be maintained and improved in the long term.



## 2. Challenges Teachers Face in Teaching English

All the teachers mentioned the various challenges they faced in teaching English. The IV teacher highlighted students' difficulty in pronunciation and comprehension because they rarely use English, "the pronunciation is difficult, the comprehension is difficult, but they already know a little." The grade V teacher added that students are awkward when speaking because learning is only once a week, "children are still embarrassed to say English sentences because they are not used to it." Meanwhile, the grade VI teacher emphasized the limitations of vocabulary and ability because he is not an English teacher, "there are many challenges because the basic mother is not English."

These findings show limitations in linguistic, methodological, and psychological aspects. Borg (2006), in the concept of teacher cognition, states that teachers' beliefs and backgrounds will shape how they design and carry out learning. Non-specialist teachers may have good intentions, but limitations in language mastery prevent teaching from running optimally. In addition, the challenges that arise also come from the lack of facilities and programs to assist teachers in learning English. Without relevant training and methodological support, teachers tend to teach based on personal experience or intuition rather than from a tested pedagogical framework. This reinforces the importance of improving teacher competence through special English training at the elementary school level.

## 3. The Influence of Non-English Teacher Background

Teachers of grades V and VI expressly state that the background of non-English teachers significantly affects the quality of learning. The teacher of grade V said, "It is very influential because it covers everything, and it is better to have an English teacher." The grade VI teacher also stated, "The mother does not know English very well, so the limitations to her child are very influential." On the other hand, grade IV teachers argue that it has little effect because English lessons are considered outside lessons.

These diverse views show that perceptions of the importance of academic background are not yet uniform. According to Widodo et al. (2022), the professionalism of teachers is directly correlated with their educational and training background. When teachers do not master relevant materials and methods, their professional competence tends to be limited, ultimately impacting learning effectiveness. An appropriate scientific background is an important foundation for developing adaptive and contextual teaching skills in this context. Teachers with a language education background are likelier to access the right approach to teaching grammar, pronunciation, and communication strategies. Differences in teachers' backgrounds cause a mismatch between curriculum demands and classroom teaching skills, especially in English subjects.

## 4. Strategies or Methods Used by Teachers

Even though they are not English teachers, all teachers try to implement learning strategies according to their abilities. Grade IV teachers use question-and-answer methods, group work, and vocabulary memorization. The teacher of grade V said that he used games, songs, and word art with the help of Infokus. Grade VI teachers ask students to bring a dictionary, look for objects around them, and translate them.





The strategies are simple and based on individual or small group activities with an audio-visual approach. According to Pinter (2006), the learning method for children must be holistic by combining elements of play, movement, visuals, and music. Thus, strategies such as songs and games can be an important bridge to overcome the limitations of teacher competence. However, the effectiveness of these strategies still depends on the teacher's understanding of the purpose of teaching English itself. In some cases, methods such as memorizing or translating words can create a cognitive burden that is inappropriate for the child's developmental stage. Therefore, there needs to be assistance in choosing a learning strategy that is not only fun but also contextual, communicative, and by the curriculum.

## 5. Teachers' Expectations for English Learning

All teachers expressed the same hope: the presence of English teachers assigned to primary schools. Grade IV teachers hope that "there will be English teachers because they are needed." The grade V teacher stated, "I hope the government will hold a program to distribute English teachers to elementary schools, not just junior high and high schools." The grade VI teacher also emphasized, "The hope is that there will be an English teacher so that students will be more fluent in the future."

This statement illustrates teachers' awareness of the importance of strengthening human resources in teaching English from the elementary level. Widodo et al. (2022) stated that teachers' professional competence can be significantly improved if supported by training and placement in their field of expertise. Teachers with the resilience to face challenges and adequate pedagogical provisions will be better prepared to carry out professional roles in learning, including in the context of basic education. Teachers' expectations show that they are aware of the limitations of their role and actively want change. This is an important signal for policymakers and education stakeholders to review the policy of distributing specialist teachers. With the placement of English teachers from the elementary level, the learning process will run and achieve quality that meets the needs of the 21st century.

## Students' Perception of Learning

**Table 1.** Recapitulation of Student Questionnaire Results on English Language Learning

No.	Statement	Agree	Fair	Disagree
1	I love learning English at school.	40	11	1
2	English lessons felt easy for me.	21	24	7
3	I love learning English by singing or playing games.	47	4	1
4	I find it difficult to learn English, especially when memorizing vocabulary.	16	27	9
5	How English is taught in school is sometimes difficult for me to understand.	20	21	11
6	My teacher's explanations during English lessons often confused me.	22	20	10
7	It is easier to learn English if my teacher explains with examples and pictures.	43	7	2
8	I prefer to learn English if it uses interesting stories or videos.	32	17	3
9	Sometimes, I was embarrassed or afraid to speak English in front of my friends.	28	21	3



10	I want English lessons at school to be more fun and easy to understand.	44	7	1
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Researchers distributed a closed questionnaire to 52 students in grades IV and V at SDN Cilaja 2 to understand how students respond to English learning taught by non-specialist teachers. This questionnaire consists of 10 statements describing students' attitudes, feelings, and experiences while participating in English learning at school. The students' answers are grouped into agree, neutral, and disagree. The recapitulation results of the questionnaire can be seen in Table 1.

Based on Table 1, most students are highly interested in English lessons. A total of 40 out of 52 students stated that they liked learning English (item 1), and 47 students felt happy if the lessons were done through singing or playing games (item 3). This signifies that students have good motivation to learn, especially when learning is delivered through fun and interactive methods.

However, the student's understanding of the material does not fully follow the spirit of learning. In item 2, only 21 students stated that English lessons felt easy. A total of 24 students felt neutral, and seven disagreed. Meanwhile, in item 4, only 16 students found it easy to memorize vocabulary, while 27 answered neutrally, and nine stated that they disagreed. The dominant neutral answer suggests that many students do not feel confident in their understanding or even feel confused when receiving the lesson.

This lack of understanding of students was further seen in item 6, where 22 students felt confused by the teacher's explanation during the lesson, and the other 20 students answered neutrally. Poorly understood explanations indicate a constraint in learning communication, which may be due to the limited English proficiency of non-specialist teachers. This is supported by the results of item 5, where 20 students stated that the teacher's teaching method was difficult to understand, while 21 students answered neutrally and 11 disagreed. The fact that almost 40% of students directly admit difficulties in understanding the teacher's teaching style shows that their understanding of the material is still weak and has not been optimally helped by the teaching methods used.

Despite this, students positively respond to using visual and contextual media in learning. In item 7, as many as 43 students found learning easier if the teacher explained with examples or pictures. This is reinforced by the results of item 8, where 32 students stated that they prefer to learn using interesting stories or videos. These findings confirm that primary school students need a concrete and visual approach to learning to help them understand a foreign language, especially when teachers are not from an English education background. This study also shows that interactive methods such as games, music, and media (items 3, 7, 8) significantly increase student motivation. This aligns with (Rafa, 2025) review, which found that "interactive pedagogies and technology greatly increase participation." This means that fun and contextual learning strategies can increase the intrinsic motivation of elementary school students, especially when they face obstacles such as embarrassment or confusion. Thus, the use of interactive media not only strengthens student engagement but also helps overcome their affective barriers.

In addition to difficulties understanding the material, students face psychological barriers in learning English. In item 9, as many as 28 students admitted feeling embarrassed or afraid if they had to speak in English in front of their friends. This fear reflects the existence of affective barriers



that can hinder students' courage to practice speaking. In language learning, this barrier is significant to pay attention to because self-confidence is one of the key factors in language mastery. Teachers need to create a supportive and safe classroom atmosphere so that students are not afraid to make mistakes when speaking.

The last item (item 10) shows that 44 students expect English lessons to be delivered in a more enjoyable and easy-to-understand way. This expectation reflects that students are aware of the shortcomings in the learning process they are experiencing and that they need changes that align with their learning style. This aligns with the integrative motivational theory of Gardner and Lambert (1972), which emphasizes the importance of positive learning experiences and environmental support in shaping students' motivation to learn a foreign language.

Overall, the results of this questionnaire show that although students show a high interest and enthusiasm for learning English, their ability to understand the material is still limited. This is most likely due to teachers' limitations in mastering English and the lack of variety in learning methods and media. Therefore, it is essential to train teachers, especially non-specialist teachers, and provide contextual, engaging, and easy-to-use learning media to make learning English more effective and meaningful for elementary school students.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that teaching English by non-English teachers at SDN Cilaja 2 faces complex challenges regarding teacher competence, learning methods, and how students understand and respond to the lessons. Non-specialist teachers admitted having difficulty communicating material effectively due to limited academic backgrounds and lack of professional training. Nevertheless, teachers still try to learn by utilizing simple strategies such as songs, games, or visualizations. On the other hand, students show enthusiasm for the English language, especially if it is delivered fun and uses contextual media. However, this interest is not fully aligned with their comprehension skills, which are still limited and hampered by less varied teaching styles and limited learning time. This research answers the formulation of the problem by emphasizing that the main challenge stems from the gap between the demands of English teaching and the capacity of non-specialist teachers to meet them, as well as from students' need for a more interactive, concrete, and supportive approach to learning. For this reason, it is recommended that the government and education policymakers consider the placement of English teachers at the elementary school level and provide special training for non-specialist teachers. Further research can expand coverage by involving more schools in different regions and examining the effectiveness of teacher training interventions in the long term.

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