INVESTIGATING NON-ENGLISH MAJOR TEACHER EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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ABSTRAK

Bahasa Inggris merupakan mata pelajaran wajib di sekolah menengah pertama, namun banyak lembaga, termasuk pesantren, bergantung pada guru non-Bahasa Inggris karena keterbatasan staf yang berkualifikasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pengalaman guru non-Bahasa Inggris dalam mengajar Bahasa Inggris di MTs Nurul Jadid, dengan fokus pada tantangan yang dihadapi dan strategi yang diterapkan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman siswa. Dengan menggunakan desain fenomenologi kualitatif dengan wawancara dan observasi, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa tantangan utama adalah kelelahan siswa akibat kegiatan pesantren yang intensif dan motivasi belajar yang rendah. Guru mengatasi hal ini melalui manajemen kelas yang adaptif, pembelajaran kontekstual dan interaktif, serta pengembangan diri yang berkelanjutan. Temuan ini menyoroti bahwa dengan komitmen, kesadaran profesional, dan kemampuan beradaptasi, guru non-Bahasa Inggris dapat mengajar Bahasa Inggris secara efektif dalam konteks pesantren.

Kata kunci: *Guru Non Jurusan Bahasa inggris, Tantangan, Strategi*

ABSTRACT

English is a compulsory subject in junior high schools, yet many institutions, including Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), rely on non-English teachers due to limited qualified staff. This study aims to investigate the experiences of non-English teachers in teaching English at MTs Nurul Jadid, focusing on the challenges faced and the strategies implemented to improve student comprehension. Using a qualitative phenomenological design with interviews and observations, the study found that the main challenges were student fatigue due to intensive Islamic boarding school activities and low learning motivation. Teachers addressed these challenges through adaptive classroom management, contextual and interactive learning, and continuous self-development. These findings highlight that with commitment, professional awareness, and adaptability, non-English teachers can teach English effectively in an Islamic boarding school context.

*Keywords: **Non-English Major Teacher, Challenges, Strategies***

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English is the process of instilling language skills, speaking, writing, reading, and listening, especially to young learners (Ali Fauzi, 2020). Teaching English is the teacher's job, as they are responsible for helping students acquire knowledge, competence, and morality while using a variety of strategies, media, and games to keep students interested in learning English, especially for young learners (Surayatika, 2022).

Schools need professional teachers because research conducted by (Riadi et al., 2022) highlighting that teacher professionalism significantly improves the quality of education and is essential for developing competent graduates, especially by focusing on student motivation amid various challenges and difficulties. Competent and well-trained teachers are essential to provide quality education and encourage student success (UNESCO, 2020).

Many educators in Indonesia lack certification, which has an impact on their professionalism, and this results in deficiencies such as an inability to create learning tools, an inadequate understanding of the material, and poor communication with students' parents, which ultimately affects the quality of education provided (Pribadi et al., 2023). This phenomenon poses a big problem for teachers and students and the education system as a whole.

Schools have solved this problem with out-of-field teaching, where teachers teach subject matter outside of their area of expertise (Olmos, 2010). As said by (Jalmaani, 2021) out-of-field teaching, as defined, is a mismatch between the teacher's training and expertise and the subject matter they teach. Whereas non-linear teachers are educators who teach subjects outside of their main area of expertise (Wulandari et al., 2024). In this case, it can be concluded that teachers who teach outside their field of expertise are teachers who are less qualified and do not have basic competencies in the subject, because what they learn is not the same as what they teach.

Many schools cannot find English teachers, so teachers without English skills are assigned to teach English in their schools (Efendi et al., 2024). The teacher is commonly referred to as a non-English major teacher. The term non-English major teacher refers to educators who teach English to young learners but do not have a formal background in English studies (Romadhon et al., 2024).

Research conducted by (Jalmaani, 2021) revealed that one of the most common experiences of non-English teachers who teach English subjects is difficulty in delivering material effectively, creating appropriate teaching methods, and fostering students' confidence in using the language. This problem not only affects the quality of language teaching but also has the potential to damage students' overall fluency and development (Efendi et al., 2024).

This phenomenon also occurs at MTs Nurul Jadid, where some teachers are assigned to teach subjects that do not follow their educational background. One prominent example is an English teacher who did not graduate from an English or literature education program. Mr Holil is a

certified counselor without an English degree, successfully teaching English through humor, assertiveness, and adaptive learning methods, while actively participating in training programs such as TESOL and ESOL. This reflects (Brown, 2001) notion that effective teaching is based not only on subject mastery but also on adaptability and a learner-centered approach. Despite the growing literature on non-English language teachers in various contexts, there is limited research specifically examining their work in a junior high school Islamic boarding school setting. This study addresses this gap by exploring the challenges and strategies used by Mr Holil in teaching English, aiming to provide theoretical insights and practical recommendations to support non-English language teachers in similar contexts.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research approach (Creswell, John W. & Poth, 2018) using a phenomenological design to explore and interpret the lived experiences of non-English major teachers in teaching English at the junior high school level in the context of Islamic boarding schools. Phenomenology is used to collect data from the lived experiences and general conceptions of a group of individuals towards the phenomenon (Creswell, John W. & Poth, 2018).

The study was conducted around July 2025 at MTs Nurul Jadid. The research participant was a teacher at MTs Nurul Jadid who teaches English and does not have an academic background in English language education. Purposive sampling was chosen to ensure the selection of individuals whose experiences are rich and contextually relevant, thereby increasing the quality and depth of the data (Bell et al., 2022). The main research instrument was the researcher, who was directly involved in collecting, interpreting, and presenting the participants' experiences. Data collection tools included a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions, which allowed flexibility to explore emerging topics (Kathy Baxter et al., 2015), and observational field notes to capture classroom dynamics and non-verbal interactions (Saduyeva et al., 2023). Data analysis followed Braun and Clake's six-phase thematic analysis process: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a final report. This approach provides a systematic method for identifying and interpreting patterns in teachers' experiences, ensuring that the analysis remains grounded in the perspectives of the participants while also connecting the findings to a broader theoretical framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Non-English Major Teacher Challenges

   There are three challenges faced by non-English major teachers in teaching English, namely contextual challenges in the

Islamic boarding school environment, minimal academic challenges, and differences in motivation and character.

a. Contextual challenges in the Islamic boarding school environment

The Islamic boarding school context presents unique challenges for teaching English. Mr. Holil explained that students' daily schedules are packed with religious and academic activities, often from morning to evening, leading to fatigue during English lessons. As he stated in an interview, "Because the activities at the Islamic boarding school are so full, they can even be from morning to morning, so it's not uncommon for students to feel sleepy at school." This situation affects students' physical readiness and concentration, requiring teachers to adjust the learning process. This challenge is in line with the opinion of (Brown, 2001) who explains that language learning cannot be separated from the social and emotional context of students.

During observations, before starting a lesson, Mr Holil was seen always checking student attendance, ensuring stationery was available, and inquiring about students' moods and readiness. This was done to ensure a more effective learning process.

b. Minimal academic challenges

Interestingly, Mr. Holil reported that teaching English at the junior high school level did not present significant academic or linguistic barriers, as he stated in an interview, "Since I've been teaching at the junior high school level, so far there has been no difficult vocabulary or material." This contrasts with research showing that non-English major teachers typically face difficulties with subject content (Fitria, 2023) highlighting that perceived difficulties may depend on the curriculum level.

This finding is in line with the opinion of (Berlian, 2022; Brown, 2001) who emphasized that teacher competence is not solely determined by academic degrees, but also by the teacher's reflective awareness and efforts to continuously improve their capacity.

c. Differences in motivation and character

Variations in student motivation and character also emerged as a challenge. Some students showed high enthusiasm, while others were less interested, making class engagement uneven. In an interview, Mr. Holil said, "If the students themselves are not interested, it becomes a challenge for me." This is in line with (Fitria, 2023) view

that learner motivation is a crucial factor in second language acquisition, and with (Brown, 2001) statement that teachers must address diverse learning styles and interests to maintain engagement.

2. Strategies Used by Non-English Major Teacher

There are three most effective strategies used by non-English major teachers to improve students' understanding of English, namely effective classroom management, contextual teaching strategies, and continuous professional development.

a. Effective classroom management

Mr. Holil implements adaptive classroom management strategies, such as grouping students by ability level to facilitate peer learning. As he stated in an interview, "We have to adapt our methods to suit the students' abilities." This practice reflects the cooperative learning approach described (Brown, 2001) in which students learn collaboratively to enhance understanding.

b. Contextual teaching strategies

contextualHe also applies contextual and interactive teaching methods, aligning lesson content with students' real-life contexts and needs. Examples include role-playing, interactive questions, and expressive practice to encourage active participation. In an interview, he said, "The strategy depends on the students in the class. The strategies I use in class are more multi-intelligent. The method is more expressive and interactive. Expressive includes practicing and expressing. Interactive is like students practicing in front of the class taking turns." Such practices are consistent with (Brown, 2001) ask-based language teaching, which emphasizes experiential and meaningful learning.

c. Continuous professional development

Despite having no formal English language education background, Teacher A actively participated in professional development programs, including TESOL and ESOL training, as well as national workshops. (Brown, 2001) highlight that continuing professional development improves teaching competency, especially for teachers working outside their initial field of study.

These findings suggest that the challenges faced by non-English language teachers in the Islamic boarding school context are shaped

more by environmental and motivational factors than by limited subject knowledge. This supports (Brown, 2001) the assertion that effective teaching relies on pedagogical and contextual knowledge. Furthermore, Mr. Holil's adaptive strategies, integrating cooperative learning, contextual activities, and ongoing professional growth, demonstrate the characteristics of reflective practice (Brown, 2001), enabling him to create an engaging and effective learning environment despite structural constraints.

These findings challenge deficit-oriented perspectives on non-English language teachers, demonstrating that a commitment to self-improvement, sensitivity to student needs, and contextual adaptation can lead to meaningful and effective English language teaching in resource-constrained educational settings.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates a non-English major teacher's experience teaching English in a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) context, focusing on the challenges faced and the strategies used to improve student comprehension. Findings reveal that the primary challenges stem not from limited mastery of the subject matter, but rather from the unique learning conditions in the pesantren environment, including busy student schedules, low motivation, and diverse student backgrounds. These factors influence classroom dynamics and require adaptive responses from the teacher.

Despite lacking a formal background in English language education, the teacher successfully overcame these challenges through experience, training, and self-study. Effective strategies included student-centered classroom management, contextual and interactive teaching methods, hands-on practice, and ability-based student grouping to foster collaborative learning. The teacher's active participation in professional development demonstrates that pedagogical competence can be developed beyond formal academic qualifications.

Overall, this study underscores that effective English language teaching is not solely determined by a teacher's academic background but also by dedication, creativity, adaptability, and sensitivity to students' needs. Non-English major teachers can be as effective as their English major colleagues when they commit to continuous learning and reflective practice, especially in culturally and structurally demanding contexts such as Islamic boarding schools.

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