

Teaching English to Junior High School: A Focus on Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the problems faced by English teachers and solutions applied in teaching at junior high schools. This study employs a mixed method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in a complementary manner. The quantitative approach was conducted through questionnaires distributed to 32 respondents from 23 junior high schools, while the qualitative approach involved in-depth interviews to gain deeper insights. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results of the study show that teachers face various problems, including limited textbooks, inadequate educational facilities, challenges in developing competencies, and differences in abilities among students. To address these issues, teachers implement a variety of solutions, such as seeking additional teaching materials, using personal facilities, attending online training, and adopting a differentiated approach in teaching. The conclusion of this study highlights the importance of greater support for teachers in the form of providing adequate facilities, professional development, and cooperation with parents and the community to improve the quality of English language learning in junior high schools.

Keywords: Problem; Solution; Teaching English

Introduction

Language is a vital tool for communication, and mastery of English has become increasingly essential in our interconnected world. As the primary language for scientific and technological discourse, English serves as a medium for interaction among individuals from diverse cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds (Dewi, 2015; Mydans, 2007; Jackson & Stockwell, 1996; cited in Abrar, 2016). In Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language from elementary school through university, there is a growing recognition of its importance in equipping students with the

necessary skills for global engagement. Despite this emphasis, challenges in English language teaching (ELT) persist, necessitating a closer examination of the factors that affect both teaching and learning.

Current qualitative research emphasizes how complex this problem is. Sebayang et al. (2025) identify issues such as student demotivation, excessive teacher workload, and the improper use of educational technology under the new Merdeka Curriculum. Similarly, Shalehah and Rahmawati (2025) report internal factors like low confidence and vocabulary deficits, and external barriers like limited practice opportunities. Moreover, large class size and significant differences in students' English skill levels also make teaching more difficult (Musthafa & Hidayati, 2021).

In Indonesia's education system, English is considered a core subject, especially at the junior high school level, where it is taught alongside other key subjects like Indonesian and mathematics (Alfarisy, 2021). While English instruction at higher educational levels is standardized, its introduction at the elementary level varies, often depending on the readiness of individual schools (Permendikbudristek No 56 Tahun 2022). This variability can impact students' foundational skills, highlighting the need for effective teaching practices and support mechanisms that ensure a comprehensive understanding of the language as they progress through their education.

Teachers are crucial in fostering students' proficiency in English, with their roles extending beyond mere instruction to encompass guidance and character development (Munif, 2015; Archana & Rani, 2017). However, many educators face significant challenges in the classroom. Research indicates that obstacles arise from multiple sources, including students' lack of motivation and basic knowledge, inadequate teaching resources, and limited professional development opportunities for teachers (Endriyati et al., 2019; Greenberg et al., 2016). Addressing these challenges is essential for improving student outcomes and ensuring that learners can effectively communicate in English.

Previously, there were some studies that have been conducted to find out the problems and difficulties that English teachers face as well as solution to overcome the problems in teaching English. Husna, Rozal, and Andriani (2021) did a study on teacher's challenges in teaching English of a Junior High School in Jambi. They used qualitative descriptive method by observation and interview. Based on the findings

of the data collection, the researchers discovered that there is various obstacle for teachers to overcome when teaching English to students. The challenges include a lack of student's interest in learning English, a lack of basic knowledge of students about English lessons, the use of a students' mother tongue in learning process, inadequate facilities at school, teacher unfamiliarity in technology, and insufficient time lesson.

Moreover, Songbatumis (2017) had been investigated the challenges and solution of English teachers of Junior High School by applied interview to four English teachers of MTsN Taliwang, Indonesia. to obtained the data. The finding revealed that a number of challenges emerged, partly come from students, partly cone from teacher, and partly from school's facility. Students are challenged by their lack of vocabulary mastery, low concentration, lack of discipline, boredom, and speaking problem. Meanwhile, teachers' challenges are short age of teachers' training, language proficiency issue, limited mastery of teaching methods, unfamiliarity to IT, and lack of professional development. In addition, facilities issues including inadequate resources and facilities, and time constraint. The solutions to overcome these challenges were also suggested in their study. The efforts taken are divided into two; efforts done by the school and by the English teachers. Reforming attitude and improving resources and facilities are the solutions taken by MTsN Taliwang. On the other hand, applying various teaching methods and techniques, matching students' proficiency level and learning situation, making use of available resources and facilities, providing motivational feedback, looking for appropriate methods or materials, and teachers' self-reflection are the English teachers' efforts in tackling English teaching challenges

The next study was conducted by Melati, Hanafiah, and Dunifa (2022) which investigated about Junior High School English teachers' problem in teaching English and the solution to overcome the problems. The researcher implemented descriptive qualitative method by using interview, observation, and document study. The result revealed that the seventh grade English teacher faced problems when teaching English, they are lack of students' motivation, lack of students' vocabulary, lack of time allocation and lack of facility. Based on the problems, teachers took solutions to overcome these problems by creating a pleasant atmosphere, being fun teacher, using song, drama, vocabulary game and code switching, simplifying materials, increasing time allocation, as well as providing facilities in school.

The previously mentioned studies highlight different problems that can be explored in this research. Previous research and this study focused on the problems faced by English teachers in teaching junior high school students. However, previous research only focused on problems related to students, teachers, and learning facilities. In this study, in addition to focusing on problems related to students, teachers, and facilities, it also discusses problems related to the use of textbooks, the education system, and social problems that affect teachers in teaching English in schools. In addition, the previous study used qualitative methods in data collection, while this study used a mixed method that included questionnaires and interviews.

Referring to the aforementioned problem statements, two research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What are the problems faced by English teachers in teaching English to Junior High Schools?
2. What are the teachers' solutions to overcome the problems encountered in teaching English at Junior High Schools?

Research Methodology

In order to successfully accomplish research aims, this study used a mixed-method approach. The purpose was to explore the problems that English teachers have in teaching English as a foreign language and the solutions they use to overcome the problems. This study used questionnaire and interview as research instruments. Questionnaire was used to answer the first research question about the teachers' problems in teaching English to Junior High Schools in Aceh Besar. Meanwhile, interview was used to answer the second research question about teachers' solutions to overcome the problems in teaching English to Junior High Schools in Aceh Besar.

A probability sampling method, specifically simple random sampling, was employed to ensure that every member of the population had an equal chance of selection. According to Sugiyono (2014), simple random sampling is effective in minimizing bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample. With a total population of 290 English teachers, the sample size was determined to be 32 teachers, representing approximately 11% of the population. This sample size is in line with Arikunto's (2010) recommendation for populations exceeding 100. Furthermore, after analyzing questionnaire, the researcher used purposive sampling to select

interview participants. The selected participants were those who mostly answered in agreement with the questionnaire statements related to the problems they faced in teaching English. The aim was to ensure the solutions that the teachers used in facing and overcoming problems in teaching English.

The researcher employed two techniques: distribution of the questionnaire via Google Forms and conducting phone interviews. The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms, providing convenience and efficiency in data collection. A total of 40 close-ended questions were developed, utilizing a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The researcher shared the link via WhatsApp, allowing respondents to complete the questionnaire in their own time, estimated to take about 10-15 minutes. Meanwhile, six participants were selected for the interviews based on their responses to the questionnaire. A semi-structured interview format was used, featuring 16 open-ended questions. This format encourages participants to elaborate on their thoughts and experiences, thereby enriching the qualitative data collected. The interviews were conducted over the phone, each lasting about 15-20 minutes. This method was chosen due to logistical constraints, enabling the researcher to gather qualitative data without significant time or resource expenditure.

Data analysis was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This analysis provided a comprehensive overview of the problems identified by the respondents. A Likert scale was used to categorize responses, with scoring ranging from 1 to 4, indicating varying degrees of agreement or disagreement with the statements regarding teaching problems.

To categorize the responses, the interval distance was calculated, leading to defined scale categories:

Table 1: Scale Category	
Scale	Category
1.00 – 1.75	Very Bad/Strongly Disagree
1.76 – 2.51	Bad/Disagree
2.52 – 3.27	Good/Agree
3.28 – 4.03	Very Good/Strongly Agree

These categories allow for a structured understanding of the teachers' perceptions regarding their teaching challenges.

In addition, for the qualitative data derived from interviews, thematic analysis was employed. As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis involves several stages, including familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The study aimed to explore the problems faced by English teachers in teaching at Junior High Schools as well as the solutions teachers do to overcome the problems. The findings of the study include the result of questionnaire and interview. The findings revealed several significant problems faced by English teachers in Junior High Schools in Aceh Besar, categorized into six distinct areas. Then the research findings also revealed various solutions provided by English teachers to overcome the existing problems.

Teachers' Problem in Teaching English to Junior High School

In this study, 40 items of the questionnaires were distributed to 32 respondents to explore their problems in teaching EFL. The questionnaire was divided into six categories. The first category presents the teachers' problems related to textbooks. The second category presents the teachers' problems related educational facilities. The teachers' problems related to educational system is in the third category. The fourth category is teachers' problems related to teachers itself. The next category is teachers' problems related to learners. The last category shows the teachers' problems related to social context.

Table 2: Teachers' problems related to textbook

NO	INDICATOR	ALTERNATIVE ANSWERS				TOTAL	Mean	Category
		1	2	3	4			
1.	Textbooks hardly answer the needs and interests of students.	3	14	13	2	32	2,44	Disagree
2.	Lack of attention to other cultures in the textbook.	0	8	23	1	32	2,78	Agree
3.	Lack of vocabulary lists in and at the end of the textbook.	0	9	19	4	32	2,84	Agree
4.	Lack of phonetic signs for	0	3	24	5	32	3,06	Agree

	vocabulary.							
5.	Lack of unity in the delivery of material in the textbook.	0	9	21	2	32	2,78	Agree
6.	There is no availability of a guidebook for teachers.	1	13	14	4	32	2,66	Agree
Total Mean							2,76	Agree

Table 2 presents respondents' views on issues related to English textbooks. Most disagreed that textbooks fully meet students' needs (mean of 2.44) and generally agreed that they lack attention to other cultures (mean of 2.78) and adequate vocabulary lists (mean of 2.48). The highest concern was the scarcity of phonetic signs for vocabulary (mean of 3.06). Additionally, respondents noted a lack of unity in material delivery (mean of 2.78) and the absence of teacher guidebooks (mean of 2.66). With an overall mean of 2.76, the findings indicate widespread acknowledgment of deficiencies in the textbooks.

Table 3: Teachers' problems related to educational facilities

NO	INDICATOR	ALTERNATIVE ANSWERS				TOTAL	Mean	Category
		1	2	3	4			
1.	Inadequate facilities for teaching such as desks, chairs, whiteboards and others.	6	22	4	0	32	1,94	Disagree
2.	Lack of educational resources, such as electronic devices, audio, teacher books, teaching aids and laboratory equipment.	0	10	20	2	32	2,75	Agree
3.	Inadequate classrooms due to the large number of students.	1	21	8	2	32	2,34	Disagree
4.	Unsuitable school spaces.	3	23	4	2	32	2,16	Disagree
5.	Lack of online/offline training for teachers.	1	11	14	6	32	2,78	Agree
Total Mean							2,39	Disagree

Table 3 addresses teachers' problems regarding educational facilities across five indicators. Most respondents disagreed that basic teaching facilities like desks and chairs are inadequate (mean of 1.94) and that classrooms are insufficient due to high student numbers (mean of 2.34). However, the majority agreed on the inadequacy of educational resources such as electronic devices (mean of 2.57) and

that teacher training (mean of 2.78) is lacking. Overall, with a mean of 2.39, respondents generally do not see facilities as inadequate, though concerns about educational resources and training persist.

Table 4: Teachers' problems related to educational system

NO	INDICATOR	ALTERNATIVE ANSWERS				TOTAL	Mean	Category
		1	2	3	4			
1.	Short/low allocation of time to deliver teaching materials.	1	25	5	1	32	2,19	Disagree
2.	The policy basis of the education system is not to learn English.	0	16	16	0	32	2,50	Disagree
3.	Very small education budget.	0	8	20	4	32	2,88	Agree
4.	Mismanagement in education.	0	13	17	2	32	2,66	Agree
5.	Lack of discipline for students.	0	7	19	6	32	2,97	Agree
6.	Lack of consistency in teacher assessment.	0	17	13	2	32	2,53	Agree
7.	Weaknesses in management by school administrator.	0	17	14	1	32	2,50	Disagree
8.	Lack of facilities and opportunities to continue education for teachers.	1	11	15	5	32	2,75	Agree
9.	The curriculum is frequently changed.	0	3	19	10	32	3,22	Agree
Total Mean							2,69	Agree

Table 4 highlights the problems faced by teachers in teaching EFL at junior high schools related to educational system. Key findings include a general disagreement about the adequacy of time for teaching (mean of 2.19) and mixed opinions on the education policy regarding English (mean of 2.50). Respondents expressed concern over the small education budget (mean of 2.88) and mismanagement in education governance (mean of 2.66). They identified significant issues such as a lack of student discipline (mean of 2.97), inconsistencies in teacher assessments (mean of 2.53), and insufficient facilities for teacher development (mean of 2.75). Notably, frequent curriculum changes were highlighted as a major problems (mean of 3.22). Overall, the average score of 2.69 indicates widespread agreement on the existence of significant problems within the education system.

Table 5: Teachers' problems related to teacher

NO	INDICATOR	ALTERNATIVE ANSWERS				TOTAL	Mean	Category
		1	2	3	4			
1.	Lack of mastery of some teachers of textbooks and language skills.	0	15	17	0	32	2,53	Agree
2.	Lack of effective courses to develop teacher competence.	1	7	22	2	32	2,78	Agree
3.	Lack of teacher discipline.	1	17	12	2	32	2,47	Disagree
4.	Poor classroom management by teachers.	1	21	9	1	32	2,31	Disagree
5.	Lack of preparation by teachers before teaching in class.	0	19	11	2	32	2,47	Disagree
6.	Teachers' inability to assign assignments appropriately.	0	25	6	1	32	2,25	Disagree
7.	Lack of good communication between teachers and students.	1	21	8	2	32	2,34	Disagree
8.	Lack of coordination between teachers and parents.	2	10	17	3	32	2,66	Agree
9.	Long distance from home to school.	1	19	7	5	32	2,50	Disagree
Total Mean							2,48	Disagree

Table 5 outlines the problems English teachers face related to themselves across nine categories. Most respondents agreed that some teachers lack mastery of textbooks and English skills (mean of 2.53) and that the absence of effective courses for teacher development is significant (mean of 2.78). However, they disagreed on issues like teacher discipline (mean of 2.47) and classroom management (mean of 2.31). Respondents felt that lack of preparation (mean of 2.47), assignment difficulties (mean of 2.25), and poor communication with students (mean of 2.34) were not major issues. They agreed, however, that lack of coordination with parents is important (mean of 2.66). Overall, with a mean of 2.48, most respondents do not see these teacher-related issues as dominant, suggesting a need for focus on professional development and improved parent-teacher coordination.

Table 6: Teachers' problems related to learners

NO	INDICATOR	ALTERNATIVE ANSWERS				TOTAL	Mean	Category
		1	2	3	4			
1.	Difficult in dealing with misbehaving students.	1	9	16	6	32	2,84	Agree
2.	Lack of motivation of students	0	5	16	11	32	3,19	Agree
3.	Large number of students in most classes.	1	15	12	4	32	2,59	Agree
4.	Lack of respect for teachers by students.	1	7	13	11	32	3,06	Agree
5.	Cultural differences among students.	0	16	12	4	32	2,63	Agree
6.	Differences in language skills between students.	0	8	17	7	32	2,97	Agree
Total Mean							2,88	Agree

Table 6 highlights the problems teachers face related to learners, featuring six key indicators. Most respondents agreed that student misbehavior (mean of 2.84), lack of motivation (mean of 3.19), large class sizes (mean of 2.59), and lack of respect for teachers (mean of 3.06) are significant issues. Additionally, cultural differences among students (mean of 2.63) and varying language skills (mean of 2.97) pose problems in teaching. With a total average score of 2.88, these findings indicate that student-related factors are primary concerns affecting the teaching process.

Table 7: Teachers' problems related to social context

NO	INDICATOR	ALTERNATIVE ANSWERS				TOTAL	Mean	Category
		1	2	3	4			
1.	Low of social status and lack of respect from society towards English language learning.	1	11	15	5	32	2,75	Agree
2.	Lack of proper understanding of the importance of English lesson by the family.	0	12	15	5	32	2,78	Agree
3.	Lack of use of English language outside the classroom.	0	6	15	11	32	3,16	Agree
4.	Learning English is only to pass tests and	0	8	16	8	32	3,00	Agree

5.	exams, not to communicate. Excessive use of Indonesian and Acehnese in the classroom by teachers and students.	0	12	13	7	32	2,84	Agree
Total Mean							2,67	Agree

Table 7 outlines teachers' problems related to the social context, identifying five key categories. Most respondents agreed that low social status and community respect for learning English (mean of 2.75), lack of family understanding of English's importance (mean of 2.78), and limited use of English outside the classroom (mean of 3.16) hinder language mastery. Additionally, the focus on exam performance rather than communication (mean of 3.00) and excessive use of local languages in class (mean of 2.84) are significant issues. With an overall average of 2.67, these findings indicate that various social and cultural factors significantly affect English teaching.

Teachers' Solutions to Overcome Problems in Teaching English to Junior High School

Under this subheading, the researchers list findings from the qualitative data. These are obtained from interview of six respondents based on the representative from the questionnaire result. The interview was done to find out the solutions of teachers in overcoming the problems related to English teaching at school.

Solutions to Problems Related to Textbooks

Teachers identified issues like a lack of cultural elements and inadequate vocabulary in textbooks. To address these, they introduced foreign cultures through supplementary materials, required students to use dictionaries for vocabulary, and sought additional resources online or from old books.

Solutions to Problems Related to Educational Facilities

Teachers faced limitations in audio-visual aids and responded by using personal speakers and coordinating the use of available facilities.

Solutions to Problems Related to the Education System

To adapt to curriculum changes and improve their skills, teachers participated in online training and proposed their inclusion in teacher deliberation groups. They also collaborated with parents to address budget constraints.

Solutions to Problems Related to Teacher

Teachers worked independently to enhance their competencies through online training and thoroughly prepared teaching materials.

Solutions to Problems Related to Learners

To boost student motivation and engagement, teachers created enjoyable learning environments with games and used differentiated instruction for varying abilities. They also approached difficult students personally to foster responsibility and discipline.

Solutions to Problems Related to Social Context

To elevate the status of English in their communities, teachers emphasized its importance and encouraged students to use English in daily activities.

Discussion

This study aims to investigate the English teachers' problems in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to junior high school students and the solutions they employed. These problems were categorized into six key domains: textbooks, educational facilities, educational system, teacher factors, learner characteristics, and social context. The finding not only confirm many of the problems identified in previous study but also highlight teachers' responses in the context of curriculum change and limited institutional support.

Problems Related to Textbooks

The study found that textbooks often lacked sufficient cultural content, structured vocabulary lists, and phonetic symbols. This supports the findings of Aliakbari and Saeedi (2022) who argue that intercultural awareness and communication ability are often overlooked in EFL textbooks. Similar to this, Ramadhana, Indah and Suhardi (2019) highlight how inadequate textbook content is for fulfilling both teachers' instructional goals and students' learning needs. Additionally, the lack of teacher guides increases the workload associated with teaching.

Policy Implication

Curriculum developers should involve EFL practitioners in textbook revision processes to enhance cultural relevance and pedagogical utility. Standardized teacher guidebooks must be provided to ensure consistency and support effective teaching practices.

Problems Related to Educational Facilities

Basic facilities like tables and classrooms were considered sufficient, but there was a noticeable lack of necessary resources including teaching materials, technology, and multimedia aids. This result is in line with Dewi and Pratami's (2022) findings that students' speaking and listening abilities in EFL environments are hindered by a lack of technical resources.

Policy Implication: Since the Merdeka Curriculum promotes active, student-centered learning, education authorities should provide fair distribution of instructional materials and digital infrastructure first priority.

Problems Within the Educational System

Teachers talked about number of systematic issues, like inadequate funding for education, few opportunities for professional advancement, and having to change the curriculum all the time. These are consistent with the finding of songbatumis (2017) and Windayanti et al. (2023), who discovered that curricular change frequently surpasses the assistance given to teachers for its execution. Teachers' capacity to innovate and adapt is severely hampered by financial limitations and insufficient training.

Policy implication

Educational policy should make sure that curricular reform is paired with organized training initiative, mentorship programs, and more funding to encourage ongoing professional development.

Problems Related to Teacher

In spite of the fact that most indicators associated with teachers had a low score, two problems emerged as particularly notable; absence of mastery in the language and not enough coordination with parents. The findings have revived the concerns described by Munif (2015) and Archana and Rani (2017) that the effectiveness of teaching stems from the teacher's professional skill and community involvement.

Policy Implication

Professional development activities are expected to cover family engagement and community collaboration alongside teaching and language skills.

Problems Related to Learners

The result indicate that teachers face difficulties related to students' demotivation, bevaioral problems, and differentiated levels of English. These findings

are comparable to those of Gunawan and Saputra (2020), who emphasize the influence of motivational techniques and classroom management on the success of language learners.

Policy Implication

Schools should adopt differentiated instruction strategies and smaller group-based learning models. Learner outcomes can be enhanced by additional support services, such as counseling and extracurricular English language courses.

Problems Related to Social Context

From a sociocultural standpoint, educators also faced difficulties. Student motivation and learning continuity are severely impacted by the belief that English is just necessary for tests, the restricted usage of English in everyday situations, and the absence of parental support. This supports the conclusions of Melati, Hanafiah, and Dunifa (2022) that English learning is undervalued in society.

Policy Implication

National language policy should promote English as a tool for communication and global engagement. Community-based English programs and parental awareness campaigns can elevate the perceived value of English beyond academic achievement.

Integrated Solutions and Teacher Agency

Despite the challenges, teachers demonstrated resilience and creativity. They utilized digital resources, sought online training, engaged in collaborative planning, and used motivational strategies such as games and student grouping. These strategies are in line with Husna, Rozal, and Andriani (2021), who emphasize teacher agency and adaptive problem-solving as critical for overcoming institutional and contextual barriers.

The solutions implemented by teachers also align with global best practices in language education, particularly in resource-constrained settings. They highlight the importance of professional autonomy, reflective teaching, and collaborative support networks in enhancing educational quality.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The conclusion of this study highlights the various problems faced by English teachers in the learning process, as well as the creative solutions they apply to overcome them. The problems identified include limited textbooks, inadequate

educational facilities, problems in the education system, difficulties in developing teacher competencies, and obstacles related to students and social contexts.

In facing these problems, teachers show high initiative and independence. They seek additional teaching materials, use personal facilities, and utilize technology and online training to develop competencies. Teachers also implement innovative learning strategies, such as creating a fun classroom atmosphere, using a differentiated approach, and taking a personal approach to students who are difficult to manage.

In addition, teachers seek to raise public awareness of the importance of the English language and encourage students to use the language in their daily lives. With these solutions, teachers have succeeded in overcoming various challenges and improving the quality of English language learning in schools.

Overall, this study shows that despite facing various problems, English teachers are able to develop effective and adaptive solutions, which not only overcome existing obstacles but also enrich the learning process and increase student engagement. These findings provide valuable insights into how teachers can be agents of change in challenging educational contexts.

Based on the finding above, the researcher suggests the schools should facilitate the teachers and students in studying English as well as preparing the suitable instructional media for teaching and learning. Furthermore, the researcher also has suggestion for all stakeholders who have power such as policy maker, textbook developers, curriculum developers, families, and societies to have good cooperation to reduce these problems.

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