

## A Systematic Review of Teaching English in Rural Settings: Challenges and Solutions

Law Woon Shan & Azlina Abdul Aziz

Faculty of Education, University Kebangsaan Malaysia

Email: p111808@siswa.ukm.edu.my, azlina1@ukm.edu.my

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### Abstract

Teaching English Language is deemed challenging and arduous for English Language teachers, particularly when it is done in rural settings where students have minimal English Language exposure. The paper presents a systematic review of the challenges encountered by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural settings and the solutions to overcome the challenges. The findings reveal a myriad of issues and challenges in teaching English in rural settings which have thwarted the development of English Language education in rural settings. The lack of qualified English Language teachers, inadequate facilities, infrastructure and teaching materials, students' limited competence in English and their negative attitudes towards learning English as well as the lack of parental support are the identified challenges confronted by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural settings. Several pragmatic solutions are suggested to overcome the aforementioned challenges such as to provide proper trainings for English Language teachers, foster positive attitudes towards teaching English among English Language teachers, improve and upgrade the facilities, infrastructure and teaching aids as well as to promote effective communication between parents and teachers. The limitations of the past studies and the recommendations for the future research are also discussed.

**Keywords:** English Language, English Teachers, Students, Rural, Challenges, Solutions

### Introduction

In today's society, English has become the international language which is being widely used all over the world as it serves the language of business, language of diplomacy, language of science and technology and language of finance and commerce in this era of globalisation. In view of the growing importance of English, learning English is definitely essential in order to explore knowledge globally and to improve one's competencies in the globalising world. English is perceived to be very crucial not only for future study and employment, but also to boost one's confidence and widen their social circle through communication with the global citizens (Zefran, 2020). Therefore, it is utmost important for learners or students to be aware of the significance of learning and mastering the language of international communication to expose themselves to more opportunities, upgrade their social mobility and increase their

competitiveness in facing the globalizing world. In order to increase English Language competence among students, it is imperative to note that English Language teachers play a crucial role in increasing students' awareness about the significance of learning English as well as giving them guidance, motivation and encouragement along their language learning journey.

English is considered as one of the most difficult and challenging languages to be acquired, especially among the non-native speakers who utilise English as their second or third language. Many ESL or EFL students lack exposure to English Language and hence, they struggle in acquiring the language (Dasaradhi et al., 2016). It is found that many of them portray negative attitudes towards learning English which is believed to be due to their low proficiency in the language (Halik & Nusrath, 2020). Therefore, it is undoubtedly true that teaching English among ESL or EFL students is not an easy task for English Language teachers. Apart from the aforementioned issues, there are various hurdles and challenges to be taken into consideration in teaching English among ESL or EFL students. The challenges are even more formidable when it comes to teaching English in rural settings with many other overwhelming obstacles. The lack of facilities and amenities, students' negative attitudes towards learning English and parents' lack of awareness about the importance of learning English are some of the main issues related to teaching English in rural settings (Febriana et al., 2018). All these issues and challenges have brought about difficulties and struggles in teaching English to students in rural settings among English Language teachers. In order to gain an insight into various challenges and issues encountered by English Language teachers in rural settings, this systematic literature review is carried out with the aim to identify the following research objectives:

- To investigate the challenges encountered by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural settings.
- To examine the solutions to overcome the challenges encountered by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural settings.

## **Literature Review**

### *Challenges of English Language Education in Rural Settings*

English Language or ESL/EFL education has always been a concerning matter in rural settings in many countries all over the world because it has not been properly implemented and developed in schools or educational institutions situated in rural areas. According to Coady (2019), the term "rurality" is believed to be related to geographical features, population density and access to social service. The impoverished conditions of the school buildings and facilities such as poor lighting, inadequate heating or cooling as well as damaged floors and roof are the adversities exhibited in many schools or educational institutions in rural settings, resulting from ignorance, negligence and insufficient funding (Marwan, Sumintono & Mislán, 2008). Deficient school buildings and facilities are definitely a stumbling block to effective learning as its inconducive teaching and learning environment poses difficulties for teachers to deliver their knowledge and at the same time, it is also challenging for students to assimilate the knowledge delivered under such circumstances. Musa et al (2012) emphasized the importance of conducive environment to motivate students in their learning process. This is supported by Paul & Kumari (2017) who stated the significance of fostering conducive learning environment to promote physical, social, mental and emotional well-being among the students.

Teaching English in rural settings is definitely a challenging task especially for English Language teachers. As mentioned above, one of the major and persistent issues encountered by English Language teachers and students in rural settings is the lack of conducive and supportive learning environment due to the poor conditions of the school buildings and facilities. Additionally, inadequate facilities and infrastructure such as internet access, ICT facilities and gadgets have also caused challenges in carrying out effective teaching and learning in rural schools (Martiana, 2019). This is in agreement with the findings by Omodan (2020) who has identified the lack of internet access as one of the issues encountered in teaching and learning in rural schools in Malaysia which leads to disruption of learning process among rural students. Without the internet access, English Language teachers claimed that they could not use interesting online teaching and learning materials such as videos and pictures in their classrooms (Martiana, 2019). In other words, limited internet access has amounted to issues in accessing to various teaching aids and materials for English Language lessons. It is acknowledged that most of the rural schools are equipped with basic ICT facilities required for teaching and learning. However, it is found that the ICT facilities in rural schools are either insufficient, poorly maintained or damaged, based on a study done by (Endriyati et al., 2019). Thus, English Language teachers and students in rural schools rarely have the chance to enjoy the benefits of these ICT facilities which slackens teachers' motivation to teach and students' motivation to learn.

Owing to the shortage of teachers in rural schools, many rural-area teachers are obligated to teach subjects which they have never been trained for, resulting in poor academic performance among rural students. In the case of English Language education, the lack of English Language teachers remains the biggest problem in rural schools in many countries. Due to the shortage of English Language teachers, many teachers from non-English educational background are forced to teach English despite their limited pedagogical knowledge, competence and skills in teaching the subject. This is supported by Izquierdo, Zuñiga & García (2021) by stating that the lack of L2 teachers in rural schools in Mexico has forced the generalist teachers to teach English despite their lack of English Language proficiency, professional trainings and teaching skills. It is also stated by Endriyati et al (2019) that one of the most common problems encountered in rural schools in Indonesia is the lack of qualified English teachers to incorporate various teaching methods and strategies in teaching English to their students.

Other than that, it is found that the failure rate in English Language among students from rural settings is relatively high as compared to students from urban settings (Ler, 2012) which proves that rural students have limited competence in English Language and they struggle to learn the language. In rural schools, students perceive English as a difficult and challenging subject because they are dominated by their own local language and rarely have the chance to use English. This is in line with the findings by Dasaradhi, Kumari & Rajeswari (2016) which stated that students in rural areas use their mother tongue most of the time and they tend to view English as a foreign language. It is also further explained that rural students have limited opportunities to use or practise English which substantially affects their confidence in using the language inside or outside the classrooms.

Zulkefly & Razali (2019) stated that rural students are aware of the importance of English Language but they do not see the immediate need of using the language to communicate with others, resulting in negative attitudes and ignorance toward the acquisition of the language. This is also supported by Mat & Yunus (2014) who found out that students in rural schools respond positively towards learning English which portrays their cognizance towards the importance of English Language. However, they are found to be quite anxious and fearful in learning the language due to the lack of motivation and efforts in acquiring the language as well as their negative perceptions towards learning the language. Therefore, it is significant for English Language teachers to understand the reasons which give rise to students' negative perceptions towards learning English and have a good communication with them to slowly change their perceptions towards learning English (Zulkefly & Razali, 2019).

Apart from the above-mentioned issues, Aziz, Swanto & Azhar (2019) stated that students' family background, socioeconomic status and also the status of English Language in their area lead to the result of poor English among rural students. Parents should have played a significant role in their children's education. Nonetheless, most of the parents in rural areas are ignorant towards English Language learning as majority of them are not highly educated and they do not see the importance of learning the language (Shahnaz & Ghandana, 2021). Hossain (2016) further elaborated that many students who live in poverty are found to perform badly in English because their parents are financially burdened to provide their children with suitable educational resources or send them to private tuitions. This has caused students to rely very much on their school English Language teachers which leads to stress among the teachers. Based on the study carried out by Han & Mahzoun (2021), it is found that parents' negative attitudes towards the teachers can build dissatisfaction and demotivation among the teachers. Thus, promoting effective communication between parents, teachers and students is important to develop understanding and trust among each other, build positive learning atmosphere and improve students' academic performance (Cheng et al., 2016).

Overall, the aforementioned issues and hurdles have imposed difficulties in teaching English in rural settings which significantly impact the quality of English Language education in rural schools. Therefore, measures and solutions should be implemented by taking the constraints into consideration with the objectives to revitalize rural schools and improve the quality of English teaching and learning in rural settings.

### **Methodology**

In conducting this systematic literature review, the databases used were ERIC and Google Scholar. 15 papers related to challenges encountered by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural settings and the solutions to overcome the challenges encountered, ranging from year 2012 to 2022, were collected from the databases, ERIC and Google Scholar and then analysed. The five phases proposed by Khan et al (2003) were used to conduct the systematic literature review, as illustrated in Figure 1.

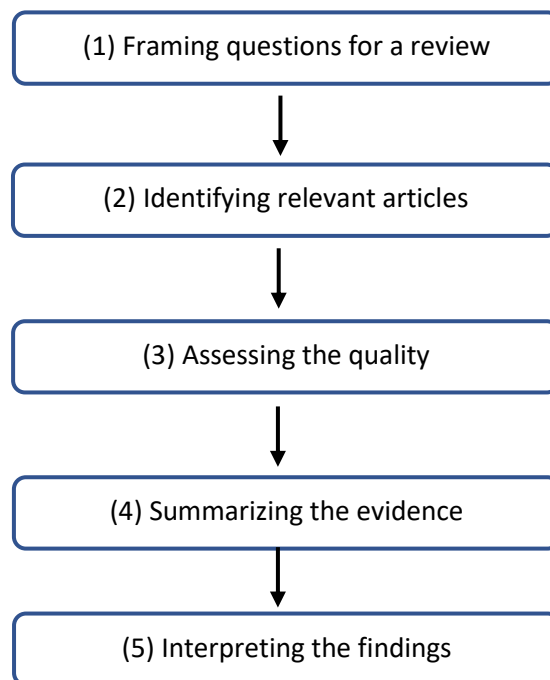


Figure 1. Phase of Systematic Literature Review

### **Phase 1: Framing Questions for a View**

Teaching English is viewed as a challenging and difficult task among English Language teachers, especially in rural settings. Numerous challenges of teaching English in rural settings have caused English Language teachers to be stressful and less motivated in English Language teaching. In this paper, the challenges encountered by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural settings and the solutions to overcome the challenges encountered were examined and investigated based on the following research questions:

- a) What are the challenges encountered by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural settings?
- b) What are the solutions to overcome the challenges encountered by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural settings?

### **Phase 2: Identifying Relevant Work**

In order to identify relevant work, it involves extensive searching for relevant articles based on the topic. The researcher has opted to search for and collect related and relevant articles published from 2012 to 2022 from the databases, Google Scholar and ERIC. It is important to ensure that the articles are chosen by referring to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In order to ease the process of searching for related articles, the important keywords “challenges OR issues OR problems encountered in teaching English in rural settings” and “solutions OR recommendations OR suggestions to overcome the challenges in teaching English in rural setting” were used to search for relevant articles.

### **Phase 3: Assessing the Quality of Studies**

It is important to be careful and precise in choosing the articles to ensure the validity of the systematic literature review. This can be done by choosing the articles based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Exclusion</b>
<b>Type of article</b>	Empirical paper	Book, concept paper, systematic review, dissertation
<b>Language</b>	English	Non-English
<b>Research Methodology</b>	Quantitative, qualitative and mixed method	No data collections or findings
<b>Target group</b>	English/ESL/EFL educators, teachers, teacher trainees	Educators/teachers/teacher trainees from non-English educational background
<b>Keyword</b>	Challenges, problems, issues, barriers or difficulties Solutions, suggestions, recommendations, strategies, ways or perceptions Rural/remote/rustic schools, institutions, settings, areas, regions	No challenges, problems, issues, barriers or difficulties No solutions, suggestions, recommendations, strategies, ways or perceptions No rural/remote/rustic schools, institutions, settings, areas, regions
<b>Year</b>	Between 2012 and 2022	Non-between 2012 and 2022

**Phase 4: Summarizing the evidence**

By using the keywords “challenges encountered in teaching English in rural settings” and “solutions to overcome the challenges in teaching English in rural settings”, 120 articles have been found from the databases, Google Scholars and ERIC. From the 120 articles found, the researcher selected and sorted them based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. 15 articles were eventually selected to be used in this systematic literature review. The data from these 15 articles were collected and tabulated.

**Phase 5: Interpreting the Findings**

As for the final phase, the findings were evaluated and analysed. Content analysis was used to categorize the findings, which was by using quantitative, qualitative and mixed method. After the process of sorting and choosing the suitable articles in the previous phase, 15 articles related to the “challenges encountered in teaching English in rural settings” and the “solutions to overcome the challenges in teaching English in rural settings” were chosen. Table 2 depicts the analysis method used by the 15 chosen articles from year 2012 to 2022. From the table, qualitative method is mostly used whereas quantitative method is least used, followed by mixed method. The findings were then be discussed further.

**Results**

Table 2

*The overview of the journal articles selected*

No	Authors & Year	Research Objectives	Research Design	Participants	Country
1	Masturi et al (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To examine the complexities encountered by rural-area preschool English teachers in teaching and learning English skills</li> </ul>	Qualitative (semi-structured interview)	6 preschool English teachers	Malaysia
2	Aziz et al (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To find out teachers' perceptions about teaching English in the rural areas</li> <li>To identify the sources of stress for teachers in teaching English Language in rural schools</li> <li>To investigate the strategies used by teachers in coping with stress</li> </ul>	Qualitative (interview & observation)	10 preschool English teachers	Malaysia
3	Milon (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To examine the current situation of teaching English in rural primary schools in Bangladesh</li> <li>To investigate the challenges to implement the English curriculum in rural primary schools in Bangladesh</li> <li>To give some recommendations to overcome the challenges of teaching English in rural primary schools in Bangladesh</li> </ul>	Mixed method (questionnaire, observation checklist & interview)	20 primary English teachers	Bangladesh
4	Febriana et al (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To investigate challenges encountered by English</li> </ul>	Qualitative (case study - questionnaire)	17 SM-3T English teachers	Indonesia

			Language teachers in conducting classroom activities in rural Indonesian schools	re, in-depth interview)			
5	Martiana (2019)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To find out the challenges in teaching English Language skills in a rural school</li> </ul>	Qualitative (questionnaire, English test, field observation note, teaching reflection)	The researcher (English teacher)		Indonesia
6	Halik & Nusrath (2020)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To investigate challenges encountered by ESL teachers in teaching English to rural students in the Kinnuya Education Zone</li> <li>To identify factors affecting teaching and learning English in the Kinniya Education Zone</li> <li>To give suggestions and recommendations to overcome the challenges encountered by ESL teachers in teaching English to rural students and to improve their English education</li> </ul>	Mixed Method (questionnaire, interview)	12 ESL teachers		Sri Lanka
7	Salahuddin et al (2013)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To investigate the present situation of English teaching and learning in rural primary schools in Bangladesh</li> <li>To find out the issues to implement English curriculum in rural primary schools in Bangladesh</li> </ul>	Mixed method (questionnaire, observation checklist, interview)	10 English teachers		Bangladesh



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To suggest ways to overcome challenges of implementing English curriculum in rural primary schools</li> </ul>			
<b>8</b>	Endriyati et al (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify the challenges faced in teaching English in rural and urban schools</li> <li>To find the solutions to all the challenges encountered</li> </ul>	Qualitative (semi interview & questionnaire)	4	English teachers Indonesia
<b>9</b>	Cheng, Yunus & Mohamad (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify issues leading to low achievement of English</li> <li>To determine overlooked issues leading to low achievement of English according to their impacts</li> <li>To make comparison between students with low English proficiency and students with high English proficiency based on the issues identified</li> </ul>	Qualitative (case study - semi-structured interview)	4	teaching staff of English Malaysia
<b>10</b>	Sarnou-Kenza Belatrech (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To investigate difficulties faced by EFL novice teachers in some Mostaganem rural schools</li> </ul>	Quantitative (questionnaire)	14	EFL novice teachers Algeria
<b>11</b>	Sharmin (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify the main barriers of teaching English in the rural primary schools in Bangladesh</li> <li>To examine the teachers' views to overcome the barriers encountered</li> </ul>	Qualitative (interview, classroom observation & focus group discussion)	19	teachers who teach English (English educational background or non-English educational Bangladesh)

					background )		
<b>12</b>	Saiful & Triyono (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To study the reflections of EFL teachers in teaching EFL to students in rural settings</li> <li>To explore the challenges encountered by EFL teachers when teaching EFL to students in rural settings</li> <li>To provide recommendations by EFL teachers about teaching EFL to students in rural settings</li> </ul>	Qualitative (case study – reflective journal & semi-structured interview)	2	EFL service teachers	Indonesi a	
<b>13</b>	Hossain (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To investigate the challenges of teaching English Language in rural settings in Bangladesh</li> <li>To examine the factors affecting students' English Language performance in rural settings</li> </ul>	Qualitative (interview, classroom observation & questionnaire)	30	English teachers	Banglad esh	
<b>14</b>	Khulel (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To investigate the difficulties faced by English teachers in teaching English to elementary students in rustic primary schools in Baureno</li> </ul>	Qualitative (semi-structured interview)	6	elementary school English teachers	Indonesi a	
<b>15</b>	Kuwat & Ghozali (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To examine the degree of the use of English by teachers in teaching English</li> <li>To explore the teaching techniques used by the teachers in teaching English</li> </ul>	Qualitative (case study – classroom observation, field note & in depth-interview)	4	English teachers	Indonesi a	

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- To investigate the problems teachers faced in teaching English
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***Challenges in teaching English in rural settings***

Table 3

***Challenges in teaching English in rural settings***

<b>No</b>	<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>1</b>	Masturi et al (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' insufficient knowledge and skills in teaching English</li> <li>• Lack of English proficiency among students</li> <li>• Parents' lack of facilitation and engagement</li> <li>• Issues related to English curriculum</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	Aziz et al (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties in educating students with low English proficiency</li> <li>• Difficulties in coping with students' negative attitudes</li> <li>• Work burden</li> <li>• Lack of support in terms of teaching resources and social support</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	Milon (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of facilities to support learning</li> <li>• Ineffective strategies used by English teachers</li> <li>• Lack of support from schools</li> <li>• Teacher's lack of training</li> <li>• Teachers' inadequate knowledge and awareness about the English curriculum</li> <li>• Issues related to assessment and giving feedbacks</li> <li>• Lacking and ineffective use of teaching tools</li> <li>• Insufficient contact hours for English</li> <li>• Teachers' limited English proficiency</li> <li>• Lack of English teachers</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	Febriana et al (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of facilities and infrastructure</li> <li>• Insufficient learning resources</li> <li>• Language barriers</li> <li>• Lack of parental awareness about the importance of education</li> <li>• Insufficient English teachers</li> <li>• Students' low competence in English</li> <li>• Students' negative mindset towards learning English</li> </ul>

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5	Martiana (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students' low proficiency in English</li><li>• Students' low concentration span</li><li>• Challenges in teaching the four English Language skills</li><li>• Limited use of English dictionary</li><li>• Lack of internet access</li><li>• Insufficient interesting teaching and learning materials</li><li>• Students' lack of motivation in participating in English classes</li><li>• Inadequate facilities</li></ul>
6	Halik & Nusrath (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students' lack of interest and motivation in learning English</li><li>• Students' negative attitudes towards learning English</li><li>• Inadequate facilities and equipment to support teaching and learning</li><li>• Lack of teaching and learning materials</li><li>• Lack of parental support</li><li>• Inconducive learning environment</li><li>• Poor family background</li></ul>
7	Salahuddin et al (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inadequate facilities for learning</li><li>• Less emphasis on English learning</li><li>• Insufficient English teaching and learning materials</li><li>• Teacher's lack of knowledge and training about English Language teaching</li><li>• Teachers' lack of awareness about the English curriculum</li><li>• Teachers' heavy workload</li><li>• Lack of teaching aids and instruments</li><li>• Insufficient English teachers</li><li>• Teachers' lack of skills in conducting English Language classes and assessing students</li><li>• Parents' lack of education</li></ul>
8	Endriyati et al (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students' lack of motivation</li><li>• Lack of parental support</li><li>• Students' poor vocabulary mastery</li><li>• Teachers' inadequate IT knowledge</li><li>• Teachers' lack of skills and training in conducting English lessons</li><li>• Insufficient school facilities</li></ul>
9	Cheng et al (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of parent's involvement in children's education</li><li>• Students' lack of motivation in learning English</li><li>• Parents' lack of education</li><li>• Low socioeconomic status</li><li>• Negative perceptions towards English teachers</li></ul>
10	Belatrech (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insufficient training during undergraduate studies</li><li>• Pedagogical problems</li></ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' lack of confidence</li> <li>• Short of ICT facilities</li> <li>• Insufficient hours for English lessons</li> <li>• Big class size</li> </ul>
<b>11</b>	Sharmin (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of qualified and skillful English teachers</li> <li>• Issues with classroom management</li> <li>• Deficient school facilities and infrastructure</li> <li>• Issues with implementing English curriculum</li> <li>• Lack of parental support</li> <li>• Students' negative attitudes towards English</li> </ul>
<b>12</b>	Saiful & Triyono (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' lack of motivation in learning English</li> <li>• Students' limited competence in English</li> <li>• Issues with accessibility to teaching materials and facilities</li> <li>• Lack of parental support and monitor</li> </ul>
<b>13</b>	Hossain (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' lack of exposure to English</li> <li>• Insufficient well-trained English teachers</li> <li>• Improper teaching methods used in English lessons</li> <li>• Inconducive learning environment</li> <li>• Inadequate library facilities</li> <li>• Poor classroom management skills</li> <li>• Lack of ability in evaluating and giving feedback</li> <li>• Lack of ICT skills</li> </ul>
<b>14</b>	Khulel (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' poor socioeconomic background</li> <li>• Parents' ignorance towards children's education</li> <li>• The status of English as a local content subject instead of the main subject</li> <li>• Challenges of online teaching and learning due to Covid-19 pandemic</li> </ul>
<b>15</b>	Kuwat & Ghozali (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' limited vocabulary mastery</li> <li>• Students' inability to understand English</li> <li>• Teachers' limited classroom management skills</li> <li>• Students' lack of motivation in learning English</li> </ul>

### ***Solutions to overcome challenges in teaching English in rural settings***

**Table 4:** Solutions to overcome challenges in teaching English in rural settings

<b>No</b>	<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>1</b>	Milon (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit more English teachers</li> <li>• Provide professional trainings for English teachers</li> <li>• Increase the supply of teaching aids</li> <li>• Upgrade the schools' facilities</li> <li>• Teachers' improvement on lesson preparation, teaching methodology and assessment</li> <li>• Revise the current English curriculum</li> </ul>

2	Halik & Nusrath (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen students' basic knowledge in English</li> <li>• Create awareness about the importance of learning English among ESL teachers, parents and students</li> <li>• Equip schools with proper facilities and infrastructure</li> </ul>
3	Salahuddin, Rabbani & Rahman (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit specialized and qualified English teachers</li> <li>• Provide sufficient trainings to English teachers</li> <li>• Increase teachers' salary</li> <li>• Provide adequate teaching aids and materials</li> </ul>
4	Endriyati, Prabowo, Abasa & Akmal (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance communication between teachers and parents</li> <li>• Provide teachers' training</li> <li>• Propose to the Local Education Department to improve school facilities</li> </ul>
5	Sharmin (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure English teachers to be well-trained</li> <li>• Cultivate positive attitudes in teaching English</li> <li>• Make sure that English teachers understand the English curriculum</li> <li>• Improve teachers' awareness about teaching philosophy</li> <li>• Increase the supply of teaching aids</li> <li>• Improve school facilities</li> <li>• Tackle the issue of crowded classroom</li> <li>• Incorporate interesting English lessons</li> <li>• Effective communication between parents and teachers</li> </ul>
6	Saiful & Triyono (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possess good traits and personalities as a teacher</li> <li>• Improve the way in giving instructions and explanations</li> <li>• Use simple English while teaching English</li> </ul>

## Discussion

### Challenges in Teaching English in Rural Settings

#### *Lack of qualified English Language Teachers*

The shortage of English Language teachers has always been a persistent problem faced in English Language education in rural schools. Many English Language teachers are reluctant to teach in rural schools due to several reasons such as low welfare (Febriana et al., 2018) and being underpaid (Salahuddin et al., 2013). The lack of English Language teachers in rural schools has caused teachers who are not expert in English resort to teaching English (Milon, 2016; Febriana et al., 2018). Their lack of profession and experience in teaching English has negatively impacted the academic performance of English Language among rural students. It is noteworthy that many English Language teachers in rural schools struggle to teach English given their lack of quality and professional trainings. One of the main obstacles pertaining to insufficient professional development among English Language teachers is the inability to use effective teaching strategies, methods or approaches in teaching English to rural students which is liable for rural students' limited competence in English Language (Milon, 2016; Hossain, 2016). Without the knowledge and skills regarding to lesson preparation and teaching methodologies, it is deemed difficult and challenging to teach English to rural students especially when it comes to teaching the four English Language skills (Milon, 2016).

In a study conducted by Belatrech (2018), novice English teachers claimed that the trainings provided during their undergraduate studies were not helpful enough for them to incorporate various teaching pedagogies in supporting their teaching of English in rural schools. Apart from the ineffectiveness of the teaching strategies or methodologies adopted in the English classes, rural English Language teachers are also found to have difficulties in terms of assessing, evaluating and giving feedbacks to students (Hossain, 2016; Milion, 2016). In addition, issues associated to classroom management also arise from the lack of English teachers' trainings (Sharmin, 2019; Kuwat & Ghozali, 2018; Hossain, 2016).

### ***Inadequate Facilities, Infrastructure and Teaching Materials***

English Language education in rural settings is characterized as disadvantaged due to inadequate facilities and infrastructure to support teaching and learning of English Language (Milon, 2016; Halik & Nusrath, 2020). According to Martiana (2019), some rural schools are supplied with basic facilities and equipment but they could not be fully utilized given the challenges in accessing to electricity. Other than that, it is found that many facilities and equipment in rural schools are in poor condition or can no longer be used (Endriyati et al., 2019). In addition to that, the lack of internet access has been one of the prominent issues faced by English Language teachers in English Language education which amounts to difficulties in getting access to various kinds of interesting teaching and learning materials (Martiana, 2019). The shortage of teaching aids and instructional materials has posed a great challenge to enhancing the process of English Language teaching and learning. For example, the shortage of English books and materials (Hossain, 2016; Martiana, 2019). Many English textbooks or printed books are the old editions which are not related to the current English curriculum (Febriana et al., 2018). The lack of supports from schools and administrators in providing necessary teaching resources has also significantly slacken English Language teachers' motivation in teaching English and affected the efficiency and efficacy of English Language education in rural settings (Aziz et al., 2019).

### ***Students' Limited Competence in English***

The issue of students' limited competence in English is prevalent in rural areas which is inevitably related to minimal language exposure (Hossain, 2016) and this would lead to countless issues and challenges in teaching English among them. English Language is only used during English lessons, but not outside the classroom and thus, rural students rarely get the opportunities to practise the language in their daily life which results in low level of English proficiency among rural students (Masturi et al., 2022). Martiana (2019) has also found that students are poor in mastering the four English Language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Besides that, students' limited vocabulary mastery has rendered them to difficulties to understand English Language (Kuwat & Ghozali, 2018; Endriyati et al., 2019). Moreover, rural students are also found to have problems in pronouncing and memorizing English vocabularies (Martiana, 2019). Based on a study done by Aziz, Swanto & Azhar (2019), it is stated that the strong first language interference among rural students are liable for students' appalling behaviour towards English Language which results in their lack of interest and motivation in learning English.

### ***Students' Negative Attitudes towards Learning English***

The issue of rural students' negative attitudes towards English Language learning has become a concerning matter which contributes to major challenges in teaching English to them. Rural

students perceive English to be a dull, boring, difficult, challenging and trivial subject in school and hence, they are not interested and motivated in imbibing the language which leads to low English quality among the rural students (Febriana et al., 2018; Cheng et al., 2016; Halik & Nusrath, 2020). Besides that, challenging learning environment in rural schools such as crowded classrooms has also demotivated students in their learning (Aziz, Swanto & Azhar, 2019). Furthermore, unhealthy student-teacher relationship is found to be another hassle that would negatively impact students' motivation in learning English whereby students are afraid of their English Language teachers which brings about anxiety in English Language acquisition (Cheng et al., 2016).

### ***Lack of parental support***

It has also been a great concern over the lack of parental support in English Language education in rural areas. It is believed that parents' educational background has an impact on their children's English Language education in rural schools. Many rural parents are not educated and therefore, they are not acquainted with the importance of learning English (Salahuddin et al., 2013; Sharmin, 2019). Consequently, they are less supportive towards English Language education. Low socioeconomic status among rural families has brought about poverty and financial difficulties, exacerbating the issue of English Language education among rural students. Parents are found to be financially burdened to provide their children with learning resources and educational materials which hinders the learning of English (Endriyati et al., 2019; Masturi et al., 2022). Owing to poor economic condition in many rural families, many parents do not have enough time and motivation to supervise their children's learning due to prolonged hour of working (Khulel, 2021; Masturi et al., 2022). Other than that, the lack of parent-teacher communication has instigated parents to be unaware of their children's performance and attitude in schools (Cheng et al., 2016), making it hard to monitor their children's learning progress and behaviour.

### **Solutions to Overcome Challenges in Teaching English in Rural Settings**

#### ***Proper Trainings for English Language Teachers***

Based on the previous studies, the shortage of English Language teachers in rural settings has been a prevalent issue and thus, it is utmost important to recruit more English teachers in order to reduce teacher-student ratio in rural schools (Salahuddin et al., 2013). Professional training workshops or programmes should be provided to English Language teachers to ensure that they are well-equipped with knowledge and pedagogical skills in delivering the lessons as well as building their confidence in educating the students. The training programmes should aim to increase the ability of English Language teachers in preparing English learning materials, integrating suitable teaching pedagogies to deliver English learning content, as well as assessing and evaluating students (Milon, 2016; Salahuddin et al., 2013). Owing to the lack of awareness among rural English Language teachers about the English curriculum (Salahuddin et al., 2013), relevant workshops and courses should also be conducted to enlighten them on the latest English curriculum in order to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum in their English classrooms. Besides that, the need to conduct trainings or workshops about Communicative Language Teaching is also emphasized in a study done by Milon (2016).



***Foster Positive Attitudes among English Language Teachers***

One of the crucial factors in affecting English Language education in rural schools is the attitudes of the English Language teachers. It is stated in one of the studies by Saiful & Triyono (2018) that English Language teachers should be creative and innovative in preparing English learning materials and conducting classroom activities, patient in dealing with the unfavourable physical environment of the rural schools as well as firm in dealing with appalling attitudes of rural students in learning English. Students' English proficiency level should also be taken into account while preparing the classroom materials and incorporating classroom activities so that students do not feel anxious or stressful during English lessons. This is again supported by Saiful & Triyono (2018) who suggested the use of simple English or repeated explanation while teaching English among rural students with limited competence in English. Other than that, many other interesting ways of helping and engaging students in English lessons have been suggested by Milon (2016): the use of translation method, remedial classes and poetry recital.

***Improve and Upgrade Facilities, Infrastructure and Teaching Aids***

Noting that rural schools are in dire need of proper facilities, infrastructure and teaching resources, it is crucial to make sure that schools in rural settings are equipped with proper and sufficient facilities and educational materials in order to maximise the learning of English among rural students. It is significant to provide equal access to learning resources and facilities like what have been given to the urban or town schools (Halik & Nusrath, 2020) to facilitate English Language learning and narrow the rural-urban gaps in terms of English Language literacy and achievement. In accordance to that, Endriyati et al (2019) suggested rural schools to propose to the Local Education Department to request for suitable school facilities and equipment to enhance teaching and learning in rural settings. Also, varieties of teaching aids and resources such as ICT and visual aids should be utilised in English classrooms to create more interesting and effective English lessons (Khalid, 2017).

***Promote Effective Communication between Parents and Teachers***

Owing to poor economic condition and educational background, rural parents tend to rely too much on the teachers in educating their children and neglect the fact that they should be involved in their children's learning. Parents play a pivotal role in supervising and guiding their children's education and they should be aware that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children are exposed to quality education. Cultivating an effective communication between parents and teachers is undeniably imperative in developing English Language education among students in rural areas (Endriyati et al., 2019; Sharmin, 2019). It is crucial for English Language teachers to build a rapport with parents in order to communicate with them about the learning progress of their children, ongoing issues which may affect their learning and also to discuss ways to help them to improve their learning (Lekli & Kaloti, 2015). Overall, effective parent-teacher communication can foster positive parent-teacher relationship which is believed to be able to improve English Language education in rural schools.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, teaching English in rural setting is deemed a great challenge among the English Language teachers. This systematic literature review explored the challenges encountered by English Language teachers while teaching English in rural settings as well as the solutions to overcome the challenges encountered.

Students in rural settings are found to be inept at English which contributes to one of the significant challenges confronted by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural schools. Students' negative attitudes and behaviour towards English Language acquisition have exacerbated the issue of weak English among them. Inadequate school facilities, equipment, infrastructure and teaching aids are the common deterrent to the efficacy of English Language teaching in rural schools. The shortage of English Language teachers as well as their lack of qualification and experience in teaching English have raised concerns about the progress of developing English Language education in rural settings. Apart from that, some parent-related issues are profound in aggravating the challenges of teaching English in rural settings. For example, parents' lack educational background and low socioeconomic status have led to ignorance and negligence towards their children's English Language education.

All the challenges and issues have thwarted the development of English Language education in rural settings. Therefore, it is utmost important to gain an insight of the challenges faced in teaching English in rural settings and overcome the challenges with possible solutions. Some recommendations are given to cope with the existing problems encountered in teaching English in rural settings. It is important to ensure sufficient number of English Language teachers teaching in rural settings to fill the shortage of English Language teachers in rural settings. It is even more crucial to make sure that they are experienced, professional and well-trained enough to cater quality English Language education to the students. Hence, the recruitment of more English teachers and the availability of upskilling trainings or professional development programme are essential for improvement of English Language teaching in rural settings. Apart from developing pedagogical skills in teaching English, English teachers' positive attitudes toward teaching English among rural students should also be cultivated in order to foster positive teacher-student relationship. Parents should not forget their responsibilities towards the children's education and therefore, they should communicate effectively with the children's English teachers in order to monitor and keep track of their children's English learning progress. Last but not least, adequate facilities, teachings aids and learning resources should be provided to rural schools to facilitate English Language teaching and to give opportunities for students to assess to various kind of English learning experience.

**Limitations and Recommendations**

It is crucial to identify and address the limitations of the study to help future researchers who would like to investigate the topic further. Most of the articles reviewed in this study only focus on the issues and challenges encountered in teaching English in rural settings in a few countries such as Malaysia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Algeria. A wider scope of research area can be considered by expanding the research to many other different countries in order to validate the credibility of the findings and discussions analysed. Hence, it is recommended for future researchers to broaden their research area by investigating issues

and challenges which other countries faced in teaching English in rural settings in order to compare the similarities and differences in terms of the obstacles confronted.

Apart from that, this systematic review focuses only on rural settings. It is recommended to do a comparison study between the challenges in teaching English in rural settings and also in urban settings in order to provide a clearer picture about the discrepancies existing in rural and urban areas regarding English Language education, especially in terms of the education inequality which exists in schools in both settings. It is very crucial to ensure the same quality of English Language education to be provided to all students regardless of whether they are residing in rural areas or urban areas as well as to reduce disparity between students from both areas. It is hoped that the quality of English Language education in rural schools can be on par with the best quality of English Language education in other schools.

Overall, it is believed that this systematic literature review can contribute as well as provide a comprehensive guideline to parents, teachers, school administrators, policy makers and other stakeholders with the aim to ascertain successful English Language learning among rural students. This paper also serves as a contribution to all relevant authorities regarding the urgency to look into and tackle the conspicuous issues and challenges encountered by English Language teachers in teaching English in rural schools which may impede their motivation in teaching English Language. It is hoped that more initiatives and measures can be taken in elevating the school facilities, providing basic necessities and making sure that the welfare of the rural students is well taken care of in order to overcome the concerned problems encountered in rural schools and provide quality education to rural students.

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