Teaching English and Plus Curriculum: Teachers' Challenges and Strategies in an Indonesian *Madrasah*

DIAN ERLINA[1], LENNY MARZULINA[2*], MUHAMAD HOLANDYAH[3], HERIZAL[4], KASINYO HARTO[5], HIKMAH ZALIFAH PUTRI,[6] AND IIN PUSPA SARI[7*]

Abstract

This qualitative case study aimed to investigate teachers' challenges and strategies in teaching English as a foreign language using a Plus curriculum, a self-designed curriculum that combines the national curriculum and the *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) curriculum. This study involved two English teachers at a private Indonesian *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic Senior High School) in Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The research revealed several internal and external challenges encountered by the teachers when teaching English using this combined curriculum. Internal challenges included three aspects: teachers' abilities to utilize ICT in teaching, designing lesson plans, and enhancing students' learning motivation. External challenges included two aspects: managing limited time allocation and dealing with inadequate learning facilities. Despite these teaching challenges, the researchers identified several strategies employed by the teachers to overcome the challenges. These strategies include improving their practical knowledge in using ICT, tailoring teaching materials and methods with learning objectives, applying various motivational strategies, providing extra time for informal learning after school, and ensuring students' access to necessary learning facilities and resources.

[3,4,] Senior lecturers, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia.
[1,5] Professors, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia.
[2*] Senior lecturer, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia and corresponding author; lennymarulina_uin@radenfatah.ac.id
[6] Lecturer, Universitas Riau, Indonesia
[7] working at Junior High School Seri Tanjung, Ogan Ilir, South Sumatra, Indonesia

Introduction

The inclusion of English as a compulsory subject in the curriculum of Islamic schools (*madrasahs*) signifies the acknowledgment of the significance of mastering the English language for both internal and external objectives. This incorporation is intended to provide students with the necessary language proficiency and communication skills essential for academic and social endeavors. Internal goals pertain to utilizing English for educational purposes within the classroom, such as numeracy, literacy, and written expression. Besides addressing internal educational goals, the teaching of the English language also seeks to facilitate effective communication and social interactions beyond the confines of the classroom. The practical application of English for social interactions or communication outside the classroom is considered an external objective (Cook, 2007). To realize these dual objectives, teachers play a pivotal role in designing, executing, and evaluating the English language education program (Hattie, 2012; Mundy et al., 2008).

In the field of teaching English as a foreign language, EFL educators frequently face numerous challenges stemming from various factors (Ahmed & Qasem, 2019; Cummins, 2006; Hasanah & Utami, 2020; Irimiea, 2016). One obstacle that hinders teachers in achieving learning objectives is related to the implementation of the curriculum in educational institutions. When implementing a curriculum, teachers may face two distinct types of challenges: internal and external. Internal barriers stem from the teachers themselves, while external barriers are linked to factors such as students, learning facilities, educational institutions, or the government. It is crucial to conduct research on the challenges faced by English teachers in curriculum implementation. By identifying and addressing these challenges, schools and relevant stakeholders can assist teachers in delivering high-quality instruction and ensuring that all students can attain their learning objectives.

The EFL teachers at an Indonesian *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic Senior High School) in Ogan Ilir regency, South Sumatra, Indonesia, also face several teaching challenges related to curriculum implementation. This school is one of the private *madrasahs* that implement the Plus curriculum, which is a combination of two types of curriculums: a national curriculum and an additional curriculum or *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) curriculum. The national curriculum is mandatory and is designed for nationwide use with uniform content and standards, while the additional curriculum is a locally designed typical curriculum based on the needs of the Islamic educational institution (Elyasin, 2010; Jauhari, 2001; Muhaimin, 2003). In other words, *madrasahs* offer both formal and informal instruction and a learning atmosphere that can promote individual development, including the mastery of foreign languages (Wekke & Hamid, 2013). The national curriculum is used as a guideline to implement teaching and learning activities at school, whereas the *pesantren* curriculum is used to support teaching and learning in the dormitory (Alghamdi, 2017; Syarfuni et al., 2019).

The combination of the government's educational system and the *pesantren t*radition was introduced by Gontor Darussalam Modern Islamic Boarding School. This school applied integrated English instruction, which offers both formal and informal language environments and requires students to communicate in English for their everyday interactions (Farkhan, 2005). Later, this curriculum became the blueprint for other Islamic schools to follow. The

outcomes of this adaptation vary according to the curriculum's intended purpose. The content of each subject is organized and tailored for different grade levels. Moreover, these subjects are complemented by non-formal activities such as dormitory activities and extracurricular pursuits. The non-formal activities are conducted in both English and Arabic, alternating every two weeks. To ensure that students use formal language in their daily interactions, regulations regarding formal language usage are also established. The purpose of using the Plus curriculum in the English subject is to enhance students' English language skills and emphasize the development of their critical mindset. It also focuses on enhancing listening and speaking skills more than the national curriculum (Yusuf, 2014). When teaching English using the Plus curriculum, teachers are required to adjust their teaching to fulfill the objectives of each curriculum.

The utilization of the Plus curriculum necessitates teachers to combine the national curriculum with an additional curriculum. This combination has given rise to various challenges and strategies for teaching English at both the school and the dormitory. In relation to this issue, several studies have reported the challenges that teachers face in implementing the curriculum in various contexts. In a study by Mandukwini (2016) on challenges to curriculum implementation in high schools, the main challenges faced by teachers included a shortage of resources, insufficient training, and a high workload. Another study by Milon (2016) on the difficulties of teaching English at rural primary schools in Bangladesh revealed that most of the difficulties faced by teachers were due to a lack of proper teacher training, the use of appropriate teaching methods and materials, limited contact hours, class size, and inadequate pedagogical knowledge. However, some other studies have reported on teachers' strategies to deal with the issues of curriculum implementation. A study conducted by Klein and Klitzer (2006) highlighted the importance of using an intentional curriculum and improving teachers' capacity through professional development and support were effective in addressing the issue of curriculum implementation. Moreover, a study by Owhonda and Amadioha (2018) in Nigeria emphasized that maximizing the use of technology and providing sufficient supporting facilities for the learning process are effective solutions for curriculum implementation problems.

Based on the descriptions provided, this current study explored English teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of the Plus curriculum at a private *Madrasah Aliyah* in Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra, Indonesia. The results of our preliminary study indicated that teachers faced some challenges in teaching English using the Plus curriculum. In this school, the national curriculum is implemented according to standard regulations, with class divisions for grades ten, eleven, and twelve. Lessons and school hours conclude at 2 p.m., and students are provided with extra time to study after school at the dormitory, focusing on English and Arabic language learning. The students are grouped based on their interests and talents. According to the English teachers, it was challenging to implement the curriculum into their teaching practices. Consequently, the researchers delved into the specific challenges faced by English teachers, shedding light on both the internal and external obstacles they encountered, as well as the teaching strategies they employed to overcome those challenges. Therefore, the research questions of this study were: (1) What were the teachers' challenges in teaching English using the Plus curriculum? and (2) What were the teachers' strategies in addressing the challenges?

Methodology

Research design and participants

Qualitative research utilizing a case study approach was employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the teachers' challenges and strategies in teaching English using the Plus curriculum. A case study is particularly advantageous in qualitative research as it allows for a thorough exploration of a specific case by obtaining in-depth information about a phenomenon, such as an activity, process, or group of people (Creswell, 2012). The participants for this study were selected through purposeful sampling using a convenience case strategy. Convenience sampling involves selecting readily available and cost-effective cases for study (Dornyei, 2007). The selection criteria were based on participants having a minimum of three years' experience teaching English in madrasah, implementing the Plus curriculum in their English teaching, and expressing willingness to take part in this research. Ultimately, two English teachers were selected as participants in this study to elucidate their perceptions of using the Plus curriculum in teaching English.

Data collection and analysis

The researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with English teachers to identify their challenges and strategies in teaching English using the Plus curriculum. To support the findings from the interviews, various relevant documents such as syllabus, lesson plans, and teaching materials were also analyzed. Document analysis was utilized in conjunction with interviews to corroborate the data from multiple sources. The use of different data sources and methods in this study aimed to provide a convergence of evidence to enhance credibility. Thematic analysis was employed for data analysis. It involved six steps: organizing and preparing the data, thoroughly reading through all the data, detailed analysis with a coding process, generating a description of the data, representing themes in a qualitative narrative, and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2014).

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data in this study, the researchers used member checking. It was used to determine the accuracy of the findings. The researchers provided opportunity for research participants to check the accuracy of the interview results. The interview transcript and data interpretation were given to the participants for accuracy checking. They came up with confirmation and verification of the findings, whether the description was complete and appropriate, the themes generated were accurate, and the interpretation was fair and representative.

Findings and Discussion

After conducting a thematic analysis of the data, the researchers discovered several findings regarding the teachers' challenges and strategies in teaching English using the Plus curriculum.

Teacher's challenges in teaching English using the plus curriculum

The first objective of this research is to investigate the teachers' challenges in teaching English using the Plus curriculum. We classified the findings into several themes and codes. Table 1 summarizes the themes and codes identified in this study.

Tabel 1. *Teachers' challenges*

Themes	Codes
Using ICT in teaching	• having difficulty in operating ICT tools • downloading and adapting materials from the internet for instruction use • generating engaging and visually appealing presentations
Desingning lesson plans	• selecting suitable materials that correspond to the learning objectives • adjusting teaching methods to align with student competencies • designing learning activities and assessments
Enhancing students' motivation in learning	• lack of enthusiasm among students to learn English • students' confidence in speaking English is also lacking • students are reluctant to speak English
Managing time	• dealing with insufficient teaching time allocation • inadequate time for teaching preparation, selecting materials, and developing instruments for learning assessments
Dealing with inadequate facilities	• Lack of learning tools such as laptop, projectors, audio devices, etc. • unstable internet connection • limited multimedia rooms

Using ICT in teaching English

The first challenge identified was the use of ICT in teaching English. This included challenges in downloading and adapting materials from the internet to develop teaching materials. Additionally, they struggled with generating engaging and visually appealing

PowerPoint presentations. The teachers expressed difficulties in using ICT, with one teacher stating, "*It is personally challenging for me; the problems arise from how to operate certain online learning applications on the computer.*" Additionally, interviews revealed that teachers encountered difficulties in downloading and editing materials from the internet for their instructional use. Teacher 2 expressed, "*At times, I struggle with downloading materials from the internet and encounter difficulties when trying to modify the content to better suit my students.*" Subsequently, the interview findings revealed that teachers lack innovative ideas for creating engaging PowerPoint presentations. Teacher 2 elaborated, "*The utilization of ICT remains suboptimal, and one of the contributing factors is our lack of familiarity with technological advancements. Particularly, I face challenges in generating captivating PowerPoint slides, incorporating pictures, and integrating animations to enhance student engagement.*"

Related to this finding, several existing research indicates that teachers have difficulty incorporating ICT into their teaching practice (Vandeyar, 2020). Cahyani and Cahyono (2012) said that the implementation of ICT makes the ELT process more exciting. However, one common issue that teachers may encounter is a difficulty in operating ICT tools. It is in line with a study conducted by Habibu et al. (2012), who found that many teachers lacked the knowledge and skills to use computers and were not eager about the changes and integration of supplementary learning associated with bringing computers into their teaching practices. Moreover, Alwani (2005) said that the lack of ICT skills is a serious obstacle to the integration of technologies into classroom teaching and learning. Based on these explanations, the researcher found the same results in this study, indicating that one of the challenges in teaching English using the Plus curriculum is the lack of teacher competence in using ICT.

Designing lesson plans for teaching English

The teachers acknowledged encountering challenges in developing lesson plans that effectively align with the learning objectives and student characteristics. Teacher 1 remarked, "*Our students are not merely graduates of MTs (Madrasah Tsanawiyah or Islamic Junior High School). This greatly influences my choice of teaching methods and materials. If the students are from MTs, they already possess familiarity with the learning environment at madrasah. On the other hand, those who are not from MTs have varying levels of abilities, which necessitates the adaptation of our lessons to accommodate these differences.*"

Furthermore, teacher 2 stated, "*It is very difficult to teach students with different abilities, so we should align our instructional materials and methods with their abilities.*" The interview results also revealed that the teachers encountered challenges in selecting suitable materials for specific learning objectives. Teacher 1 elaborated, "*When designing lesson plans, there must be alignment and balance between the materials and the learning objectives. Therefore, it is challenging to select appropriate materials that can effectively meet the learning objectives.*" Additionally, teacher 2 emphasized, "*Media, materials, and methods need to be integrated into a unified unit and aligned with the learning indicators.*"

This finding was supported by Caires et al. (2012), who described how a student's educational background affects their ability to learn, making it the teacher's responsibility to address these differences and formulate lesson plans and choose appropriate teaching methods. Additionally, Yeh (2007) stated that the biggest challenge for any teacher lies in understanding the varying learning abilities of the students. Essentially, learning objectives are

linked to achieving the basic competencies (KD) as required by the curriculum in use. In summary, the adjustment of teaching methods to match student competencies and the selection of suitable materials that align with learning objectives represent significant challenges in teaching English using the Plus curriculum.

Motivating students in learning English

Improving students' motivation in learning was also challenging for teachers. There was a lack of enthusiasm among students when it comes to learning English. Their confidence in using the language was also lacking, which resulted in their reluctance to speak English. This can be seen from the statements of the teachers who claimed that they feel challenged to teach students who are less enthusiastic about learning English and not confident in speaking English. The teachers mentioned that some students were less enthusiastic about learning English. Teacher 1 said, "*Some students are less enthusiastic about learning; they lose their concentration and do not focus on the lesson.*" Moreover, teacher 2 also noted, "*I think some students do not really like or enjoy learning English. They perceive English as a difficult subject. This perception could affect their behavior in learning, and as a result, they easily get bored and fail to achieve learning objectives.*" Then, the teachers claimed that in speaking activities, some students were shy, not confident, and reluctant to speak English.

In line with this finding, Sardiman (2012) stated that the biggest challenge for any teacher is how to motivate, guide, and encourage students when they underperform, lose their focus, and are distracted due to various circumstances. Furthermore, the finding was supported by Anugrah (2021), who found that the students were less motivated to follow English learning because they thought English was a difficult subject. The lack of student motivation was triggered by the students' unfamiliarity with English. It can be summarized that the teachers' abilities to improve students' motivation were considered the next challenge faced by the English teachers in teaching English using the Plus curriculum.

Managing limited time allocation

Dealing with insufficient time allocation was also challenging for teachers. The time allocated by the school for the English subject was limited. Teacher 1 said, "*Time allocation is the most challenging thing because we have a lot of materials to discuss as mandated by the curriculum. For one meeting, we only have 90 minutes. Of course, this is not enough time to discuss all the materials and exercises, resulting in some of them not being fully covered.*" Furthermore, teacher 2 said, "*Sometimes, when we have arranged the time allocation very well, suddenly there were some changes. For example, when the students have finished the sports subject, they need more time to change their clothes. Then, I have to adjust to this condition, which ultimately leaves me with less time for my English class.*" The teachers mentioned that they did not have enough time for teaching preparation, selecting materials, and developing instruments for learning assessments.

This issue is related to a study conducted by Marzulina et al. (2021), which revealed that English is taught for a limited time. Consequently, English teachers are challenged to deliver the lesson effectively and efficiently within a limited time frame. Furthermore, Batley and Golek (2014) have also highlighted that limited time poses another problem in teaching

English. Class time is often very short, with lessons occurring only once or twice a week, and lasting only an hour or two each day, which makes it challenging to cover a lot of material. As a result, lesson plans are often not fully developed, leading to a need for review of the last unfinished teaching-learning process in the next class. If this situation persists, the teacher may fail to achieve the predetermined goals. Additionally, Aedi and Amaliyah (2017) have noted that the problem of lack of time exists for teachers in many aspects of their work, as it affects their ability to complete tasks. For example, limited opportunity for learners to practice their English in the classroom due to inadequate time and language switching from English to their mother tongue (Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007). In brief, limited time allocation will have an effect on the quality of learning, and this is one of the challenges for teachers in teaching

Dealing with inadequate learning facilities

Dealing with inadequate facilities or limited technical support such as computers, projectors, and audio devices, was also one of teachers' challenges in delivering effective instruction. The teachers described that technical support and teaching facilities were inadequate at the school. Teacher 1 mentioned, "*The facilities are still very lacking. For example, when I want to teach listening, I have to bring my personal loudspeakers to the classroom.*" Similarly, Teacher 2 expressed, "*The provided textbooks are insufficient for the students' needs, and other facilities such as computers, LCD/projectors, and speakers are also inadequate.*" Additionally, based on the data obtained from interviews, an unstable internet connection was identified as a problem in the teaching and learning process. Teacher 1 highlighted, "*The lack of technical support, such as computers and internet connections, has become a challenge in the teaching and learning process.*" Furthermore, Teacher 2 stated, "*There are only a few computers available in the school. Additionally, the internet connection is sometimes unstable, so it takes a lot of time to access the internet.*"

This fact is in line with Ajibola (2010) and Fajaryani et al. (2018) also stated that ensuring the availability of sufficient learning facilities such as textbooks, computers, listening devices, and other teaching instruments was a challenging task for teachers. In addition, according to Osborne and Hennessy (2003) and Habibu et al. (2012), hardware and software problems such as network connectivity or low internet speed creates the barriers for teachers to use ICT in teaching. This is further supported by research conducted by Yunus and Salehi (2012), which found that teachers believed that low internet speed prevented them from effectively implementing ICT in schools. In conclusion, the limitations on access to hardware and software resources influence teachers' motivation to use technology for teaching English.

Teachers' strategies in teaching English using the plus Curriculum

The second objective of this research is to investigate the teachers' strategies in teaching English using the Plus curriculum. Table 2 summarizes the themes and codes identified in this investigation.

Table 2. *Teachers' strategies*

Themes	Codes
Improving practical knowledge in using ICT	• updating their skills through self-learning resources such as YouTube • engaging in various tutorials on ICT use, online and in person • collaborating with other teachers to make video recordings for some lessons
Tailoring teaching materials and methods to be integrated into lesson plans	• prior to instruction, administering a pre-test to gauge students' competency levels • utilizing digital resources and employed interactive teaching methods • incorporating collaborative learning activities
Using various motivational strategies	• utilizing games, quizzes, storytelling, and role-playing to engage students and make learning enjoyable • establishing discussion groups to encourage active participation and enhance communication skills • encouraging regular English-speaking practice among students to enhance language proficiency
Providing extra time for informal learning after school	• conducting activities through *Daurah* (English courses at the dormitory) • conducting activities through *Lebah/Lembaga Bahasa* (language labs) • facilitating students' independent learning through group works after school
Ensuring access to necessary learning facilities and resources	• bringing personal essential tools like wireless speaker, laptop • Providing students with supplementary handouts • implementing a scheduling system for the utilization of existing multimedia rooms

The researchers identified several strategies employed by the teachers to address their challenges in teaching English using the Plus curriculum. The strategies were categorized into: (1) improving practical knowledge in using ICT, (2) selecting appropriate teaching methods and materials integrated into lesson plans, (3) using various learning styles, (4) giving extra time for informal learning, and (5) providing the necessary facilities and resources.

Improving practical knowledge in using ICT

To obtain important insights and abilities for successful ICT integration into their teaching practices, both teachers indicated how they were constantly enhancing their practical understanding of using ICT through self-learning and collaboration with other educators.

Teacher 1 mentioned, "*I prefer self-learning, like watching tutorial videos from the internet to learn how to make interesting presentation slides.*" Similarly, teacher 2 clarified, "*I often watch tutorials on ICT use through YouTube and working with other teachers to create videos for some lessons.*" Both teachers described that they were continuously improving their practical knowledge and skills for effective ICT integration into their teaching practices.

This indicated that self learning through internet, social media, and the web, such as YouTube can be a good and practical strategy for teachers in developing their ICT skill as a 21st-century teaching ability (Chee et al., 2011). Besides, YouTube can also be a good instructional resource and a source of learning motivation for students as they like to find materials in actual or audiovisual form (Samosir et al., 2018). It can be used for a variety of purposes, including study and enjoyment, personal branding, and social connection. In addition to self-learning, teachers need time to collaborate with their fellow teachers for sharing insights and educational supports (Rahman, 2021).

Selecting appropriate teaching materials and methods

Another strategy the teachers used was thoughtful selection of instructional materials and methods that complemented the learning objectives as stated in the lesson plans. They described that in designing the lesson plan, they chose appropriate materials aligned with basic competence, as stated by the teacher 1, "*The materials must align with the learning objectives and students' needs.*" They utilized digital resources by presenting materials in a variety of formats like videos and interactive quizzes to help students better retain and recall information." They employed interactive teaching methods to enhance the overall learning experience for students. According to the teachers, incorporating collaborative activities such as group discussions and role-playing exercises were helpful to encourage students to practice their English. Teacher 2 illustrated, "*Through group discussions, students are actively engaged with the materials. They ask questions, seek clarification, and receive feedback from their classmates and teacher.*" In addition, they administered a pre-test to gauge students' competency levels for tailoring the material to the specific needs and abilities of the students. They assessed students' abilities with a pre-test before determining the materials and methods.

According to Chatif (2011), a pre-test is administered before the teacher commences the lesson to gauge the students' initial abilities related to the material to be delivered. By understanding these initial abilities, teachers can more easily determine the models and methods to be applied in teaching. Additionally, Tomlinson (2011) stated that teaching material encompasses everything created by people (such as writers, teachers, or learners) to provide and utilize information and facilitate language learning experiences, designed to promote language acquisition. Therefore, in developing materials, it is essential to first identify learners' needs and consider the objectives of the learning as well as the basic competence of the curriculum. After this, the materials can be developed by adapting them to better suit the learners' needs. In summary, accurately understanding the content of lesson plans is the next strategy in teaching English using the Plus curriculum.

Using various motivational strategies

The teachers stimulated students to be active in class by utilizing various motivational strategies. They claimed that utilizing various motivational strategies such as games, quizzes, storytelling, and role-playing was helpful to engage students and make learning enjoyable. Establishing discussion groups could encourage active participation and enhance communication skills. Encouraging regular English-speaking practice among students also helped in language proficiency. Teacher 1 stated, "*I identify their learning styles by employing attractive approaches like games based on the lesson, quizzes, storytelling, and role-playing to motivate them to learn English and to make them pay more attention to the material.*" Teacher 2 mentioned, "*To capture their attention, I usually initiate small group discussions and encourage them to learn together to solve problems related to the material. I also motivate them to learn English by emphasizing the importance of the language in achieving their future goals.*" Moreover, the teachers encouraged students to speak English regularly to help them enjoy using English in their daily activities. Teacher 1 said, "*I encourage them to use English during the learning process in their daily activities; by using simple phrases they can use every day. I focus on simple sentences. Additionally, I provide them with clear direction on what formal and informal language looks like.*" Teacher 2 mentioned, "*I help the students focus on the material, allowing them to explore their ideas and encouraging them to speak up through collaborative learning activities.*" In summary, the teachers aim to make students more active by focusing their attention on the material and encouraging them to speak English in their daily activities. This was in line with what Davidson and Major (2014) have stated that developing communicative abilities and working as part of a collaborative team promotes discussion, interaction, and problem-solving. Love et al. (2014) revealed that in small groups, students work together to complete different activities and have the chance to engage more in learning. Importantly, it gives students an opportunity to take the lead, to teach and learn from one another, and often come up with their own ways to practice the material together.

Motivational strategies vary across cultures, and there is no universal strategy that can be applied to all EFL classrooms across all cultures (Wong, 2013). There are numerous ways to create various activities in the classroom that can help students practice in more authentic ways and build confidence and social networks for learning. Schiefele (2017) has suggested that one of the ways to get students excited about learning is by introducing interactive games or quizzes in the classroom. Assessing student learning by adding in a quiz or game can help to switch up standard teaching techniques and wake up students with something interactive and engaging. In brief, creating study groups is meaningful, and teaching with an attractive approach is the right strategy to address challenges related to students' motivation.

Providing extra time for informal learning after school

The teachers explained that they provided extra time for English learning after class. They held English program "*daurah*" (English courses) and *Lebah/Lembaga Bahasa* (language laboratory) to enhance students' listening and speaking skills. The teachers described that they offered additional time for informal learning after school, "*Daurah*" was held in the dormitory as a venue to improve students' communication skills. Teacher 1 stated, "*Due to the limited*

teaching time in the classroom, I afford students more opportunities after school to practice listening and speaking." Teacher 2 added, "*I allocate additional time for informal English learning through the 'Daurah' conducted in the dormitory. This daily activity takes place before Maghrib and after Subuh, or whenever there is material that remains unfinished from class.*"

The strategies implemented by the teachers in this study are in line with Batsleer's (2008) assertion that students should be granted additional learning time for various reasons, including learning disabilities, limited study availability, and health conditions. Moreover, Li et al. (2005) revealed that the most effective method to explore and enhance subject matter involved integrating informal learning and allocating extra time outside of school. Therefore, teachers should create more space for students to practice their English in various modes of activities through group work, peer review, etc. (Misdi, 2017). In summary, providing extra time and supplemental materials outside of regular school hours can greatly benefit students in maximizing their knowledge. With time constraints during the school day, learning can be facilitated through informal approaches and extracurricular activities.

Ensuring access to necessary learning facilities and resources

To overcome the lack of availability of resources, both teachers took the initiative to bring in necessary materials and utilized the multimedia room effectively for educational purposes. By providing students with a variety of learning tools and engaging activities, they aimed to enhance the learning experience and cater to different learning styles. Additionally, their efforts to incorporate technology in teaching demonstrate a proactive approach to keeping up with modern educational practices and making learning more interactive and engaging for students. Teacher 2 mentioned, "*I bring the things I need for teaching if they weren't available in the school, such as speakers, English novels, English newspapers, and additional materials/handouts.*" They also mentioned that the multimedia room could be used alternately. Teacher 1 expressed, "*Sometimes, if possible, I will invite students to study in the multimedia room to watch and review movies related to vocabulary, grammar, and to stimulate their listening skills.*" Teacher 2 added, "*I prefer to teach the students in the multimedia room, but they have to take turns because of the small number of computers.*" The teachers' efforts to incorporate technology in teaching demonstrate a proactive approach to keeping up with modern educational practices and making learning more interactive and engaging for students. However, limited multimedia rooms, computers, and facilities in *madrasah* posed a significant challenge to ensuring equitable access to technology-enhanced education for students. One effective solution for this problem was implementing a scheduling system for the utilization of existing multimedia rooms. By creating a structured timetable for different classes or student groups to access these facilities, the teachers could ensure equitable distribution of students' opportunities for multimedia learning access.

Ensuring access to necessary facilities and resources, such as multimedia rooms and personal items like wireless speakers and additional modules, could enhance the learning environment. If there are still issues with learning facilities, teachers will explore other options by preparing, providing, and creating teaching materials, and even bringing their personal tools as needed. This was similar to what Hoplan (2013) revealed in his study, teachers tried to solve problems by themselves. For example, the problem with inadequate textbooks, the teachers

used other learning resources from the internet or ICT-based learning implementation (Akbaba-Altun, 2006). Multimedia rooms in schools has proven to be a valuable asset in facilitating interactive and engaging learning environments. The integration of multimedia resources allows educators to present information in a dynamic and interactive manner, making complex concepts more accessible and comprehensible. Teachers can create an immersive learning environment that captures students' attention towards the lessons. In conclusion, the utilization of multimedia makes learning more practical, innovative, and effective (Al-Ajmi & Aljazzaf, 2020).

Conclusions and Implications

This study identified three main internal challenges that EFL teachers encountered when implementing a Plus curriculum in English language instruction. First, their abilities in using ICT in teaching, designing lesson plans, and fostering and sustaining students' motivation towards learning. In addition to internal challenges, this study also revealed the external challenges faced by teachers in this context. Limited time allocation and learning facilities emerged as prominent external challenges. They posed a hindrance to effective English language teaching, as access to resources, technological tools, and conducive learning environments significantly impacts the quality of instruction and student engagement. Despite those teaching challenges, the study uncovered several strategies of the teachers in addressing the complexities of teaching English with the Plus curriculum, such as combining traditional teaching methods with digital resources to enhance student comprehension and engagement, improving their practical knowledge in using ICT, selecting appropriate teaching methods and materials, using various motivational strategies, providing extra time after school, and ensuring the availability of necessary learning facilities.

This study highlights that madrasah English teachers are grappling with several teaching challenges related to learning facilities. Therefore, it is imperative for schools to ensure that the available learning facilities are adequate and complement the instructional needs. The teachers are also striving to create an interactive and engaging English learning environment to maintain student interest and prevent boredom in learning by utilizing various technological tools and software in their teaching practices. Therefore, they should be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to enhance their ICT skills, improve their lesson planning competence, and acquire strategies to boost student motivation effectively. Professional development opportunities, mentorship programs, lesson plan design support, and access to instructional resources should be provided to help empower teachers to enhance their teaching practices. In addition, as this study has focused on understanding the challenges that teachers encounter in delivering content and managing the classroom, there is a need to further explore the intricate web of difficulties, such as designing lesson plans and evaluating the learning process. Conducting further research in this area is essential to empower teachers with the knowledge and resources necessary to overcome these challenges and create dynamic and inclusive learning environments for students.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest or any other similar divergence associated with this research article by the authors.

References

Abd-Kadir, J., & Hardman, F. (2007). The discourse of whole class teaching: A comparative study of Kenyan and Nigerian primary English lessons. *Language and Education*, *21*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.2167/le684.0

Aedi, N. & Amaliyah, N. (2017). *Manajemen Kurikulum Sekolah*. Gosyen Publishing.

Ajibola, M. A. (2010). Confronting the challenges of teaching English language as a second language in Nigeria. *Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association (JNESA,) 13*(2), 95-105. http://nigeria-education.org/content/confronting-challenges-teaching-english-language-second-language-nigeria

Ahmed, S. T. S., & Qasem, B. T. A. (2019). Problems of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in South Yemen: a case study of Lahj Governorate. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, *2*(4), 485–492. https://doi.org/10.34050/els-jish.v2i4.7458

Akbaba-Altun, S. (2006). Complexity of Integrating Computer Technologies into Education in Turkey. *Educational Technology & Society*, *9*(1), 176–187. http://www.ifets.info/journals/9_1/15.pdf

Al-Ajmi, N. H., & Aljazzaf, Z. (2020). Factors influencing the use of multimedia technologies in teaching English language in Kuwait. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, *15*(05), 212–234. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v15i05.12277

Al-Alwani, A. (2005). Barriers to Integrating Information Technology in Saudi Arabia Science Education: Doctoral dissertation, the University of Kansas, http://gradworks.umi.com/31/85/3185124.html

Alghamdi, A. (2017). The effects of an integrated curriculum on student achievement in Saudi Arabia. *Eurasia journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, *13*(9), 6079–6100. https://doi.org/10.12973/eurasia.2017.01051a

Anugrah, P. M. (2021). Analysis of teachers' challenges in teaching speaking through online learning during Covid-19 pandemic in SMAN 2 Abiansemal. *Journal of Educational Study*, *1*(2), 26–36. https://doi.org/10.36663/joes.v1i2.183

Bartley, S. J., & Golek, J. H. (2004). Evaluating the cost effectiveness of online and Face-to-Face instruction. *Educational Technology & Society*, *7*(4), 167–175. http://elibrary.lt/resursai/Uzsienio%20leidiniai/IEEE/English/2006/Volume%207/Issue%204/Jets_v7i4_16.pdf

Batsleer, J. R. (2008). *Informal Learning in Youth Work*. SAGE. http://books.google.ie/books?id=i0ZsCgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Batsleer,+J.+(2008)+Informal+Learning+in+Youth+Work.+London:+Sage.&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

Cahyani, H. & Cahyono, B. (2012). Teachers' attitudes and technology use in Indonesian EFL classrooms. *TEFLIN Journal. 2*(2). 130-146. http://journal.teflin.org/index.php/journal/article/view/143/135

Caires, S., Almeida, L., & Vieira, D. (2012). Becoming a teacher: student teachers' experiences and perceptions about teaching practice. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *35*(2), 163–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2011.643395

Chee, T. S., Divaharan, S., Tan, L., & Mun, C. H. (2011). Self-directed learning with ICT: Theory, practice and assessment. Singapore: Ministry of Education.

Cook, V. (2007). The Goals of ELT. In *Springer eBooks* (pp. 237–248). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-46301-8_18

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th Ed). Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. SAGE.

Cummins, C. (2006). *Understanding and implementing reading first initiatives: The changing role of administrators*. International Reading Association.

Davidson, N., & Major, C. H. (2014). Boundary crossing: Cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and problem-based learning. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching, 25*(3), 7-55.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics : quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA82715592

Elyasin, M. (2010). *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*. Adiya Media Publishing.

Fajaryani, N., Masbirorotni, M., Nuraini, N., Nafrial, N., & Nopianti, N. (2018). Different madrasah, but the same stories: academic and Non-Academic challenges encountered by teachers in teaching a foreign language. *Ta'dib*, *23*(1), 65–86. https://doi.org/10.19109/td.v23i1.2065

Farkhan, M. (2005). Pengajaran bahasa Inggris terpadu ala Gontor. *Fenolingua: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya. 1*(2), 1-25. http://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/39406

Habibu, T., Mamun, M., & Clement, C. (2012). Difficulties faced by teachers in using ICT in teaching-learning at Technical and higher Educational Institution of Uganda. *International Journal of Engineering Research & Technology. 1(7). 1-9.*

Hasanah, N., & Utami, P. T. (2020). Emerging challenges of teaching English in Non-native English-Speaking countries: Teachers' view. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, *2*(3), 112. https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v2i3.1134

Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. Routledge.

Hopland, A. O. (2013). School facilities and student achievement in industrial countries: Evidence from the TIMSS. *International Education Studies*, *6*(3). 162-171.

Irimiea, S. B. (2016). English as a foreign language. What challenges do teachers of English face? *DOAJ (DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals)*. https://doaj.org/article/5e04b35cd0a643429e9a09735bfd7dc1

Jauhari, M. I. (2001). *Sistem pendidikan pesantren: Mungkinkah menjadi sistem pendidikan nasional alternatif*. Mutiara Al-Amien Printing.

Klein, L. & Knitzer, J. (2006). *Pathways to early school success: Effective preschool curricula and teaching strategies*. NCCP.

Li, Y., McCoy, E., Shelley, M., & Whalen, D. F. (2005). Contributors to student satisfaction with special program (Fresh Start) residence halls. *Journal of College Student Development*, *46*(2), 176–192. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2005.0011

Love, A. G., Dietrich, A., Fitzgerald, J., & Gordon, D. (2014). Integrating collaborative learning inside and outside of the classroom. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, *25*(3), 177–196. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1041369

Mandukwini, N. (2016). *Challenges towards curriculum implementation in high schools in Mount Fletcher district, Eastern Cape*. https://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/22251

Marzulina, L., Harto, K., Erlina, D., Holandyah, M., Desvitasari, D., Arnilawati, A., Fridiyanto, F., & Mukminin, A. (2021). Challenges in teaching English for EFL learners at *pesantren*: Teachers' voices. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *11*(12), 1581–1589. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1112.10

Milon, R. (2016). Challenges of teaching English at the rural primary schools in Bangladesh: Some recommendations. *ELK Asia Pacific Journal of Social Sciences, 2*(3), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.16962/EAPJSS/issn.2394-9392/2014

Misdi, M. (2017). Empowerment in madrasah: What English teachers have to say. *Academic Journal Perspective*, *5*(1), 36-44. https://doi.org/10.33603/perspective.v5i1.551

Muhaimin. (2003). *Wacana pengembangan pendidikan Islam*. Pustaka Pelajar.

Mundy, K., Bickmore, K., Hayhoe, R., Madden, M., & Madjidi, K. (2008). *Comparative and International Education: Issues for teachers*. https://www.amazon.com/Comparative-International-Education-Teachers-Perspectives/dp/0807748811

Osborne, J., & Hennessy, S. (2003). Literature Review in Science Education and the Role of ICT: Promise, Problems and Future Directions. Bristol, UK: FutureLab Series. Retrieved from http://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/19/04/41/PDF/osborne-j-2003-r6.pdf

Owhonda, N. & Amadioha, S. (2018). Strategies of curriculum implementation in Nigeria. *Universal Journal of Humanities, Physical, Sosial and Management Sciences.11*(3). 107-114. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335491535_STRATEGIES_OF_CURRICULUM_IMPLEMENTATION/link/5d69023f92851c154cc5e4c2/download

Rahman, A. (2021). High participation, low impact: The challenge for teacher professional development in Indonesia. *International Journal of Pedagogy and Teacher Education*, *5*(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.20961/ijpte.v5i1.46636

Samosir, F. T., Pitasari, D.N., Purwaka & Tjahjono, P. E. (2018), The effectiveness of Youtube as a student learning media (Study at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Bengkulu), *Record and Library Journal*, *4*(2), 81-91.

Sardiman, S. (2012). *Teaching and learning interaction & motivation*. Rajawali Press.

Schiefele, U. (2017). Classroom management and mastery-oriented instruction as mediators of the effects of teacher motivation on student motivation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *64*, 115–126. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.02.004

Syarfuni, Nuruddin, Rafli, Z. (2019). Learning method and teaching material of Plus curriculum in the Madrasah Aliyah Darul Ulum, Banda Aceh: An ethnographic study. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 10(3), 48-54. http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.10n.3p.48

Syarfuni, Nuruddin, & Rafli. Z. (2019). Learning method and teaching material of plus curriculum in the *Madrasah Aliyah* Darul Ulum, Banda Aceh: An ethnographic study. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, *10*(3), 48-54. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.10n.3p.48

Tomlinson, B. (2011). *Materials Development in Language Teaching.* Cambridge University Press. http://books.google.ie/books?id=TmhyTQji2UEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Tomlinson,+B.+(2011).+Introduction:+Principles+and+procedures+of+material+development.+Cambridge:&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

Vandeyar, T. (2020). A window to teachers' ICT practices: Discerning between teaching and the complex science of pedagogy. *Ensaio*, *28*(109), 982–1011. https://doi.org/10.1590/s0104-40362020002802388

Wekke & Hamid, S. (2013). Technology on language teaching and learning: A research on Indonesian *pesantren. Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, 3*(2), 585-589.

Wong, R. (2013). An investigation of strategies for student motivation in the Chinese EFL context. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *8*(2), 132–154. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2013.777449

Yeh, S. S. (2007). The cost-effectiveness of five policies for improving student achievement. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *28*(4), 416–436.

Yunus, M. M. & Salehi, H. (2012). The effectiveness of facebook groups on teaching and improving writing: Students' perceptions. *International Journal of Education and Information Technologies*, *6(1),* 87-96. https://research.iaun.ac.ir/pd/hadisalehi/pdfs/PaperM_7787.pdf

Yusuf, H. O. (2014, April 28). Assessment of the implementation of the reading component of the English language curriculum for basic education in Nigeria. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, *5*(2), 96–102. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.5n.2p.96

Biographical Notes

DIAN ERLINA is working at the Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia.

LENNY MARZULINA is working at the Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia.

MUHAMAD HOLANDYAH is working at the Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia.

HERIZAL is working at the Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia.

KASINYO HARTO is working at the Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia.

HIKMAH ZALIFAH PUTRI is working at the Universitas Riau.

IIN PUSPA SARI is working at Junior High School Seri Tanjung, Ogan Ilir