

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of study, problem identification, research questions, research purposes, significance of research, and definition of key terms. This chapter elaborates the why's study conducted which was supported by reasoning and relevant theory in problem of identification.

1.1 Background of Study

The educational quality gap in Indonesia results in unequal quality of the education system among schools, especially in rural areas. The implementation of 21st century skills in English language teaching has become a challenge in most schools in rural areas, as the main focus of teaching and learning in the 21st century era is digitalization despite the reforms of national education system which, most of schools in rural area were still struggle in such aspects like limited resources and lack of teachers (Cuong, 2021). These issues were affecting the quality of student education, particularly during the implementation of certain essential skills. In this digital era, the English language is not only a reflection of enhanced linguistic skills but also a means to support the skills that enhance students' competencies in addressing global problems and challenges. These are often referred to as 21st century skills. The importance of teaching based on 21st century skills is no longer a matter of debate in the education context. The direction of education based on 21st century teaching has been specified in life knowledge that can be useful for students, such as dynamic Theory and unpredictable problem-solving, critical thinking, and many others (Facione, 1990). In

other words, these 21st century skills are specifically used to enhance students' English skills and produce students' mentality in facing the modern world, which has been dominated by technology.

The 21st century skills started with some basic skills that had been used as the central competencies in the digital era. The education framework in the world began with the 4C skills development as its main theory in social thinking skills. The 21st century brings the power of education development with the rapid progress of the digital era. Students need to learn complex skills based on modern life in this era. As globalization accelerates in the education context, new theories emerge about the skills required. Those four skills, which include learning and innovation skills, are critical thinking and problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity skills, often collectively referred to as 4C skills. Critical thinking skills help students find answers to the questions asked. The skill enables students to analyse, think deeply, ask questions, and provide feedback on the topic. Creativity skills are essential for encouraging students to learn new things daily. Creativity learning aims to enable students to find new solutions to problems they encounter in real-world situations. By definition, communication skills show ideas, knowledge, and information through vocal expression. Sending information and ideas to be understood by the recipients is the main point of the skill. To achieve collaboration skills in working collaboratively with other people, create and build effective programs, build effective work teams, create positive working teams, and have high confidence. The implications of 21st-century skills emerged when past education began with the direct assessment of content

material at the end of the classroom. Concerns about the considerable gap in knowledge and skills across all human aspects have highlighted some important aspects that need to be developed for both teachers and students (Browne & Keeley, 2007; Erdogan, 2019; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; National Education Association, 2010).

While English has been a priority subject in most schools, some rural schools still require assistance to achieve effective teaching and learning. The teaching and learning of rural schools have become unfinished issues to be discussed in the education context (Supriadi et al., 2023; Tseng, 2021). The development of the education system in rural areas depends on multiple sectors, but the government plays the most significant role. According to the Education and Culture Ministry's report on East Java Education statistics for 2023, the average percentage of students who completed high school in Indonesia is 29.51% for urban students and 18.62% for rural students. The report noted that the lack of infrastructure for the learning and teaching process contributed to the lower number compared to the previous year. The relevance and context of underdeveloped areas in education, as well as the implementation of 21st century skills, focus on addressing their learning challenges. Fadilah et al. (2023) explained that English education in rural areas appears to be less effective than in urban areas. Several factors are contributing to this, including inadequate school facilities, unqualified English teachers, and a need for improved internet access. Education in most rural schools needs improvement in terms of technology, teachers' quality, and school curriculum policy, resulting in a low percentage of English language teaching implementation. This issue has become a recurring concern that arises annually in the

context of education. The government still needs to work on narrowing the quality gap in rural teaching. Some factors that indicate the contrast gap include teachers' availability, the quality of teaching facilities, the quality of teaching strategies, and inadequate infrastructure. One of the islands facing these issues is Ra'as Island. Due to the challenges above, implementing 21st century skills, especially critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration, is the best option to initiate changes in conventional culture with greater adaptation (Devynn & Gregor, 2021).

Geographically, Ra'as is situated on an island that is part of the Madura province. In the east of Maduranese, there are some small islands. The island can only be reached by ship, 5-10 hours from Sumenep city, Madura, East Java. The island is known for its local maritime businesses. The island was not classified as one of Indonesia's underdeveloped areas. The island was included as a rural area due to its characteristics. The island has only one public health centre, no pharmacy, a damaged road, and some schools that are unsuitable for teaching and learning. The education system in Ra'as Island primarily focused on religion and the Islamic distinctive cultural entity (Mohsi, 2019). There are no studies conducted regarding the formal education contexts, especially in English language education. On the other hand, a similar island, such as Ra'as Island, located near the Ra'as called Kangean Island, which can be reached by ship in 5 hours from Sumenep, has a similar situation to Ra'as Island. Kangean also had struggles in infrastructure and facilities, but their local government made an effort and maximized their competencies to develop their educational system. In some reports and

articles about Kangean Island, the local government has initiated business agreements with private institutions outside the island to promote further development on the island. Until now, from kindergarten to senior high school, students have had access to a technology instructor and free internet during school hours to boost their awareness in digital contexts (Epifani Rachmad Gunadi et al., 2024). In some cases, the Sacmeq third edition surveyed Rodrigues Island, a South Asian island with similar characteristics to Ra'as Island. It was Rodrigues Island, located in Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean. The island also faced challenges due to its remote location, limited facilities, and a predominantly agricultural and ocean-based economy. To reach the island, one must take a sea transport or a ship, which takes 5-8 hours. On the other hand, the government of Mauritius has already implemented a new policy to bring educational resources up to date, adapting them to the needs of remote areas. The Mauritian education government has invested in more digital and internet-supported programs. The program is still in its early stages, but it has been using stable internet since the pandemic (Dwarkan, 2017). The two cases above confirmed the existence of a gap between the two countries and the two nearby islands. Although Indonesia and Mauritius are included as developing countries, they received different treatment for their education systems. Additionally, with the Kangean and Ra'as Islands, although they shared a similar situation, Kangean had impressive development in the educational context.

Although several studies have examined the general challenges of teaching in rural contexts, there is limited scholarly attention specifically focused on the implementation

of 4C skills includes critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration in English language teaching in rural areas, particularly on Ra'as Island. This gap underscores the need for a more in-depth examination of how teachers perceive and experience the process of integrating 21st century skills into the classroom. Therefore, this study aims to explore English teachers' perspectives and classroom practices related to 21st century skills in the context of Ra'as Island, including the strategies, challenges, and what teachers need to face the teaching challenges.

1.2 Problem Identification

This study was initiated due to the limited implementation of 21st century teaching skills in English language teaching in remote areas, especially in Ra'as Island. The limitations of 21st century teaching skills, especially in the English language. Some studies have explored the implementation of 21st century skills those are critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, which were rarely applied in rural contexts due to certain challenges. Each of the schools faced different challenges, including the limitations of poor-quality facilities in rural schools, low teacher knowledge due to the prevalence of incompetent teachers, and limited access to technology. The 2022 statistical data on education in East Java indicate that three regions in East Java have low educational percentages: Bondowoso, Sampang, and Sumenep. (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). However, Sumenep will not be included in the 3T area in Indonesia in 2022. Geographically, Sumenep is comprised of eight islands located far from the central cities. All the islands can be reached by ship in 5 to 8 hours.

One of the islands is Ra'as Island. From the pre-survey in Ra'as Island, which related to the teaching of the English language to one of the English teachers in one of the senior high schools in Ra'as Island, the researcher can conclude that there were three challenges that they faced in the learning process, such as:

1. Lack of understanding. The Indonesian language is their daily language. Most of the students were taught why they studied the English language when they were still struggling with Indonesian.
2. Unqualified teachers. The East Java government had created rules that required teachers from the city to teach in every school, but most teachers only came to teach once or twice a month, or possibly less.
3. Lack of Electricity. The Raas electric automatically from 6 pm to 6 am. They only have to charge all the electricity in 12 hours. As a result, the technology used is minimal.

According to Bhat (2023), education in Indonesia especially in rural areas, remains a source of concern. Countries need to improve their quality, but compared to other regions and urban areas, they still require further development. Among the key issues faced by rural schools are the integration of technology and the adaptation of effective teaching strategies aligned with the demands of 21st century learning. The implementation of learning in this study includes strategies that used during the learning process, challenges, and what teachers need to face these challenges in Ra'as Island. The researcher interviewed the teacher and conducted a classroom observation

to strengthen the findings. The study's results are expected to provide valuable evidence for future researchers and offer insights for readers.

1.3 Research Limitation

The study will focus on teachers' perspectives on implementing 21st century skills or 4C skills in their English language teaching in Ra'as Island, including their learning experiences, challenges, and factors that influence the learning process. On the other hand, the limitations of this study can be summarised in several points. The first is the limited number of English teachers necessitated that the researcher only interview three teachers on Ra'as Island. The second is related to the limitation of digital access. During direct observation, the absence of digital tools limits access to observation. Most of the research is happening only in the classroom. The next is about research participant. The third researcher would not allow the researcher to observe the learning process in the classroom because internal reason. Therefore, there are no direct observations with the third teacher. The classroom observation came only with the first and second teachers, and the last one about the topic related. The topics observed in this research are the implemented strategies during the learning process, the teachers' challenges, and their mitigation to face the challenges. The data collection conducted through interviews with three teachers and supported by direct observation of English learning and teaching in the classroom. The study will not cover any domains beyond the topic of study and will exclude unrelated answers from the teachers' perspectives and observations.

1.4 Research Question

Following the research background of the study, some problems were formulated as the research questions, such as:

1. How is the teaching of 21st century skills within English language teaching implementation in Ra'as Island?
2. What are the challenges teachers faced in implementing the 21st century teaching skill in English language teaching in Ra'as Island?
3. What are the mitigations have teachers taken to implement the 21st century teaching skill in English language teaching on Ra'as Island?

1.5 Research Purpose

From the research questions above, these are the research purposes:

1. To explain the teaching of 21st century skills within English language teaching implementation in Ra'as Island.
2. To investigate the challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the 21st century teaching skill in English language teaching in Ra'as Island.
3. To investigate the mitigations taken by the teachers in implementing the 21st century teaching skill in English language teaching in Ra'as Island.

1.6 Significance of Research

The significance of research can be divided into two types: theoretical and practical significance. Both types are determined to make positive contributions. Theoretical significance refers to the extent to which the study contributes to knowledge and

academic settings, while practical significance explains the study's impact on the real world or community. The significance of the research is as follows:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The source and study focus on educational contexts, especially the implementation of 21st century skills in Ra'as Island. The researcher expects that this current study will contribute to the theoretical and empirical understanding of learning skills in the 21st century, particularly in under-resourced contexts. Additionally, this study can serve as a valuable reference for future researchers investigating related topics with similar variables or other related areas.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

In practical significance, the study can be beneficial for some aspects, such as:

- a) For the teacher. The study will focus on teachers' learning experiences in the classroom during the implementation of these skills. Therefore, this current study can serve as an additional source and learning support, providing information to enhance learning activities.
- b) For the educational policy-makers and the government. The study was located in one of the under-resourced areas, Ra'as Island, which had a significant gap in terms of facilities and infrastructure. The study aims to serve as a source of information, prompting them to pay extra attention to the education system in rural areas, including specific curricula and policies that support students' learning development.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

In this sub-chapter, the research presents two types of definitions: theoretical and operational definitions. The theoretical definitions refer to how the theory of key terms supports the current study based on the existing literature and journals. Meanwhile, the operational definition clarifies the theoretical concept under investigation. The definition terms are as follows:

1.7.1 Theoretical Definition

a) The Nature of English Language Learning Implementation

According to Brown (2001), The process of teaching and learning also depends on some of English teaching natures, and those are Teaching methods and skills, classroom interaction and management, students' skills and language competencies, learning strategies, learning assessment, and the role of technology which also used in this 21st century. Some countries in the world treat the English language as a foreign language. They use it in specific contexts, such as office and school activities, often widely, but not in our daily lives (Broughton et al., 1978). One of the countries is Indonesia. It is because Indonesia has its national language, which is used daily and socially.

b) English Language Learning in Rural Areas

From a general perspective, learning and teaching English in Indonesia is challenging for teachers and schools. We need more strategies for learning a

language we have not become familiar with since birth. Therefore, maximizing teachers' strategies and competencies, as well as utilizing effective learning media with the efficiency of technology, are used to teach the English language successfully in the classroom. Otherwise, most schools in rural areas lack teachers, and technology makes English language teaching more complicated than in urban schools (Della & Dian, 2022).

c) Learning and Innovation Skills (21st Century Skills)

Trilling and Fadel, in their book on 21st century, identify three categories of life skills that need to be taught to students: learning and innovation skills, digital literacy skills, and life-development skills. Those four skills, which include learning and innovation skills, are critical thinking and problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity skills, often referred to as the 4C skills (National Education Association, 2010). The implications of 21st century skills emerged when past education began with the direct assessment of content material at the end of the classroom. Concerns about a significant gap in knowledge and skills across all aspects of human life were raised, highlighting the importance of being skilled in both aspects for teachers and students. 21st century skills aim to achieve how educational purposes can be effectively reached. Implementing the 21st century also aims to produce better outcomes for students. Critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration are essential skills that must be developed to face the 21st century (National Education Association, 2010). Critical thinking

skills help students find answers to the questions asked. The skill enables students to analyze, think critically, ask questions, and provide feedback (Browne & Keeley, 2007). Creativity skills are essential for encouraging students to learn new things daily. Creativity learning aims to enable students to find new solutions to problems they encounter in real-world situations (Erdogan, 2019). By definition, communication skills show ideas, knowledge, and information through vocal expression. Sending information and ideas to be understood by the recipients is the main point of the skill (Nur et al., 2021). Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) also mentioned the students' skills/knowledge to achieve collaboration skills, such as the ability to work collaboratively with other people, create and build effective programs, build effective work teams, create positive working teams, and have high confidence.

1.7.2 Operational Definition

a) The Nature of English Language Learning Implementation

The nature of English language learning encompasses various aspects of the language learning process, including teaching methods and skills, classroom interaction and management, students' skills and language competencies, learning strategies, learning assessment, and the role of technology. In this study, the implementation of English language learning refers to how teachers applied strategies in language learning, the challenges they faced, and the mitigations they took.

b) English Language Learning in Rural Areas

As described above, the phenomenon of English language learning in rural contexts has a significant gap compared to non-rural areas. The specific reason is that the government is difficult to handle, as the area includes under-resourced areas. In this study, the Rural areas will be located in Ra'as Island. The implementation of English language learning was observed through teacher interviews and classroom observations.

c) Learning and Innovation Skills (21st Century Skills)

In this study, the learning and innovation skills, often referred to as 21st century skills, can be observed through the frequency and quality of teaching activities that implement four skills, includes critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication. In the implementation of critical thinking and creativity, the researchers aim to observe how teachers facilitate students' competencies in developing ideas and fostering creative thinking. In the implementation of communication and collaboration skills, the researcher would like to know the teachers' strategies, including classroom activities, that help students develop their communication and collaboration skills.