



THE CHALLENGES OF ADAPTING ENGLISH NOVEL IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the primary challenges faced by English teachers in adapting English novels for instruction in Indonesian senior high school EFL classrooms. It explores the difficulties encountered and suggests practical strategies to enhance the integration of literature into language teaching. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected via online structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Participants were selected through purposive sampling from two senior high schools. Findings reveal that while teachers value adapted English novels for fostering language proficiency and cultural understanding, they face significant obstacles, including students' limited reading competence, lack of instructional time, inadequate resources, and a curriculum that emphasizes functional English over literary study. Teachers commonly respond by simplifying texts and selecting more accessible literary content. This study contributes meaningful insights into the realities of literature adaptation in both vocational and general secondary EFL contexts in Indonesia. It offers practical implications for curriculum planners, educators, and policymakers by highlighting feasible classroom strategies and aligning literature use with existing curricular constraints. The research adds to current ELT literature by emphasizing context-specific pedagogical adaptations and advocating for more inclusive and literature-enriched English instruction.

Keywords: *English novel adaptation, EFL classroom, Indonesian high school, teacher challenges, literature teaching, language learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

Adapted English novels hold significant potential as enriching resources for language instruction in senior high school EFL contexts. Unlike conventional textbooks, which often offer limited exposure to authentic language use, literary texts immerse students in nuanced vocabulary, complex sentence patterns, idiomatic expressions, and culturally embedded discourse. Ganaie (2018) and Garrard (2020) asserts that literature provides a meaningful linguistic and contextual framework that fosters deeper language awareness and promotes personal engagement with the text. Similarly, Collie and Slater (2017) advocate for the integration of unabridged literary works such as novels into EFL classrooms, citing their

effectiveness in enhancing learners' linguistic proficiency, cultural literacy, and critical thinking capabilities. Rosenblatt (2018) further argues that literary texts serve as a vital bridge between textbook language and real-world communication, offering learners exposure to language as it is authentically spoken and written. However, Rojabi (2021) and Mertler (2024) acknowledge a recurring challenge for educators: the difficulty of sourcing literary materials that align with students' proficiency levels and curricular objectives. This underscores the importance of carefully selecting and adapting novels to ensure accessibility while preserving their linguistic and cultural richness. Issues like not enough time in class, limited access to new

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books, and a focus on practical English skills instead of analyzing literature also make it hard to use novels more widely in teaching (Nunan, 2023; Shi et al., 2024; Fitrawati et al., 2023). Authentic literary texts introduce students to the way language is naturally used, thus helping them develop a better understanding of grammar and style of delivery, while providing insight into the social and cultural values contained in the text. Exposure to literary texts has been widely recognized for its role in enhancing learners' language awareness, critical thinking abilities, and intercultural competence, as such texts often portray real-life situations and diverse social viewpoints (Khadafi, 2021; Jaya et al., 2025; Rahmawati, 2022). Despite these pedagogical advantages, integrating English novels into EFL instruction presents notable challenges for educators. Many teachers encounter difficulties in effectively implementing literature-based approaches. As Buridgge & Stebbins (2015) and Gee & Gee (2020) highlights, authentic literary texts may create substantial linguistic obstacles if not thoughtfully chosen or accompanied by adequate instructional support. Students frequently struggle with unfamiliar vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, or complex sentence structures, which can hinder comprehension and reduce motivation. Moreover, not all students exhibit an intrinsic interest in reading, particularly when engaging with lengthy English-language novels that may seem daunting or monotonous. To address this, it is essential for educators to select texts that align with students' developmental stages and interests, thereby sustaining engagement a principle (Arhire, 2023; Adhitya & Novita, 2021). Additionally, as McKay (2018) observes, English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia, and learners typically have minimal exposure to authentic English outside the classroom, further complicating the integration of literary materials in secondary education contexts.

Based on the above, this study explored these challenges in more depth by understanding the problems faced by teachers. This research aimed to investigate the real challenges teachers face when adapting English novels for senior high school students and to find solutions to help them adapt literature more successfully.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Drawing on previous studies, various factors have been identified as contributing to the challenges teachers face when incorporating English novels into EFL instruction. Gardner (2018) and Sirisrimangkorn (2021) emphasized that authentic literary texts can become significant linguistic obstacles when not carefully selected or adequately scaffolded, often leading to students' struggles with unfamiliar vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and syntactic complexity ultimately impacting their comprehension and motivation. Additionally, the nature of English novels as foreign-language texts with substantial length can lead to disengagement, particularly among students with low reading interest. In contrast, Halliday (2019) argues that literature in EFL contexts fosters meaningful language use, critical thinking, and cultural literacy, while Ambrose and Lourdusamy (2022) notes that novels offer exposure to authentic language and idiomatic usage rarely encountered in conventional textbooks. However, the disparity between learners' proficiency levels and the linguistic demands of original texts remains a persistent challenge. As such, adaptation, strategic selection, and pedagogical support are critical for effective implementation. Regionally, research such as Wahyuni et al. (2021) reveals additional constraints, including limited instructional time, dense curricula, and generally low student reading motivation. In response to these concerns, teachers frequently opt for simplified or

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abridged texts. Building upon these insights, the present study delves deeper into the real-world challenges faced by English teachers in adapting novels for senior high school learners and aims to offer practical solutions to enhance literature integration in EFL classrooms (Almusharraf, 2021; Seroja Br Ginting & Fithriani, 2021; Gallacher et al., 2019).

3. METHODS

This research employed a qualitative methodology to investigate the challenges encountered by senior secondary school English teachers in adapting English novels for EFL instruction (Patton, 2020; Tisdell et al., 2025). Classified as descriptive qualitative research, the study utilized a survey-based design, incorporating both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as primary data collection instruments (Sugiyono, 2021). This methodological choice was intended to provide an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions, experiences, and strategies in adapting literary texts within the EFL classroom context. Participants were drawn from two educational institutions SMKN 2 Pekalongan and MAN 1 Kota Pekalongan. A total of five English teachers, selected through purposive sampling due to their relevant experience in teaching English literature or integrating novels into their instruction, participated in the study. The research was carried out over a two-month period, from May to June 2025.

Two primary instruments were used in this study:

1. Questionnaire: The researcher created a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms. This was done to collect both numerical data and in-depth insights regarding teachers' views, difficulties, and approaches (Miall & Kuiken, 2019; Dornyei & Taguchi, 2019).
2. Interview Guide: A semi-structured interview guide was prepared to get

more thorough explanations and real-life examples from the teachers. The interviews were carried out in person and recorded using phone recorder (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Kvale, 2021).

The data were analyzed using the Thematic Analysis method suggested by (Braun & Clarke, 2019). A six-step process was followed, including familiarizing with the data, creating codes, developing themes, reviewing those themes, naming and defining them, and finally writing the report.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researchers share the results and insights from the study, which are based on the responses given by the teachers in the questionnaire and interview.

A. Result**1. Questionnaires Result****Table 1. Result of Questionnaires**

| No | Statement | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
|----|--|------------|-----------|-------------|
| | Adapting English novels makes them easier for students to grasp compared to the original versions. | | | |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 4 | (Agree) | |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 4 | (Agree) | |
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 4 | (Agree) | |
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 3 | (Neutral) | |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 4 | (Agree) | |

This table shows what respondents thought about how adapted English novels compare to the original versions. Four out of five teachers said that adapted novels were easier for students to understand, and one teacher was neutral. This suggests that most teachers supported adapting novels to help students better understand them.

Table 2. Result of Questionnaires

| No | Statement | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
|----|--|------------|---------|-------------|
| | I can effectively use English novels in teaching English in the classroom. | | | |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 4 | (Agree) | |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 4 | (Agree) | |

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| | | | |
|---|--------------|---|-----------|
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 3 | (Neutral) |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 4 | (Agree) |

This table shows how confident respondents felt about using English novels in the classroom. Four teachers agreed, and one was neutral. This indicates that most teachers felt confident in using English novels for language learning.

Table 3. Result of Questionnaires

| No | Statement | | |
|----|---|-------|------------------|
| | English novels are suitable and valuable for use in English language instruction. | | |
| | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 3 | (Neutral) |

This table shows what respondents thought about whether English novels were suitable and useful for language learning. Nearly everyone either agreed or strongly agreed, with only one person being neutral. This means that respondents believed that English novels are very appropriate and helpful in teaching.

Table 4. Result of Questionnaires

| No | Statement | | |
|----|--|-------|------------------|
| | I feel confident in incorporating English novels into my teaching. | | |
| | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 3 | (Neutral) |
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 3 | (Neutral) |
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 3 | (Neutral) |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |

This table shows how confident respondents are about including English novels in their teaching. Two people were very confident, and three were neutral. This shows there is some level of confidence, but some teachers or educators might feel they need more support or training.

Table 5. Result of Questionnaires

| No | Statement | | |
|----|--|-------|------------------|
| | Using English novels increases students' interest in learning. | | |
| | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 3 | (Neutral) |
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 3 | (Neutral) |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |

This table shows what respondents thought about how using English novels affected students' interest in learning. Three teachers agreed that novels increased interest, one strongly agreed, and two were neutral. It seems that most teachers believed that English novels help boost students' interest in learning.

Table 6. Result of Questionnaires

| No | Statement | | |
|----|---|-------|------------------|
| | English novels help students grasp cultural and moral themes. | | |
| | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 5 | (Agree) |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |

This table shows what people think about how English novels help students understand cultural and moral themes. Most people either agreed or strongly agreed, which means that they believed English novels are good at helping students grasp these values.

Table 7. Result of Questionnaires

| No | Statement | | |
|----|---|-------|------------------|
| | English novels can enhance students' English abilities. | | |
| | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 4 | (Agree) |

In this table, everyone agreed or strongly agreed that English novels can help

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improve students' English language skills. This shows that there was a general agreement that using novels is helpful for language learning.

Table 8. Result of Questionnaires

| No | Statement | | |
|----|---|-------|------------------|
| | English novels can serve as topics for classroom discussions. | | |
| | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 4 | (Agree) |

This table shows what people thought about using English novels as materials for classroom discussions. Everyone either agreed or strongly agreed, meaning they thought that English novels are very suitable for use in discussions.

Table 9. Result of Questionnaires

| No | Statement | | |
|----|---|-------|------------------|
| | Students' reading skills improve by English Novels. | | |
| | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 4 | (Agree) |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 4 | (Agree) |

This table shows that everyone agreed or strongly agreed that using English novels can help improve students' reading skills. This indicates that teachers believed that English novels are effective in developing reading abilities.

Table 10. Result of Questionnaires

| No | Statement | | |
|----|---|-------|------------------|
| | I do not face any challenges when using English novels for teaching in the classroom. | | |
| | Respondent | Scale | Explanation |
| 1 | Respondent 1 | 5 | (Strongly Agree) |
| 2 | Respondent 2 | 2 | (Disagree) |
| 3 | Respondent 3 | 3 | (Neutral) |

| | | | |
|---|--------------|---|-----------|
| 4 | Respondent 4 | 3 | (Neutral) |
| 5 | Respondent 5 | 3 | (Neutral) |

The last table shows what teachers experienced regarding the challenges of teaching with English novels. One person strongly agreed, one disagreed, and three were neutral. This shows a range of opinions. Some teachers did not face any difficulties, others still encountered challenges, and most of them were neutral.

Based on the tables above, this study shows the key-points of the result such as:

- 1) Teachers had a positive view about using English novels in their lessons. Most of them agreed or strongly agreed that adapted English novels were easier for students to understand, they could be used effectively in class, and novels were a good choice for teaching English.
- 2) Adapted novels were clearly preferred over the original versions. This shows that adapting novels made them more suitable for students' language levels.
- 3) Teachers saw clear advantages for both language and cultural learning. They mostly agreed or strongly agreed that novels help students understand cultural and moral situations, improve their English skills, enhance reading abilities, and support classroom discussions.
- 4) While using novels was thought to increase student interest, the responses are not all the same. Some teachers said they were neutral about whether novels really make students more interested. This suggests that student engagement depends on how the novels are taught and which ones are chosen.
- 5) Confidence and practical challenges still remain. Even though teachers saw the value of using novels, many felt neutral about their confidence in doing so. They also tended to be neutral or disagreed about whether they faced difficulties. The lower score on the questions 10th shows that teachers experienced practical problems, like time limits, students' vocabulary gaps, or a lack of support materials.

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2. Interview result

The interview data were examined through the application of thematic analysis in accordance with the framework established by (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2022). The coding process resulted in the identification of several key themes concerning teachers' perspectives, advantages, challenges, and recommendations related to the utilization and adaptation of English novels for senior high school students.

➤ Theme 1: Perceived Benefits

The first theme shows that teachers mostly saw clear academic and cultural advantages in using English novels.

Teachers often said that novels help develop several language skills at the same time.

For instance, Respondent 5 mentioned, *"Novels help students improve critical thinking, learn new words, and practice speaking and reading."*

Similarly, Respondent 1 noted that *"novels can improve reading skills, expand vocabulary, and boost students' imagination."*

Respondent 2 and 3 also talked about the cultural benefits.

Respondent 2 explained that *"novels introduce local customs, food, clothing, and social traditions," but she also warned about being careful to filter out any inappropriate cultural values.*

Respondent 3 said that *"novels clearly help increase vocabulary, grammar understanding, and cultural knowledge."*

➤ Theme 2: Practical Constraints and Mismatch

Even though there are clear advantages, all the teachers mentioned practical challenges that make it hard to use novels, especially long ones. One big problem is the difference in students' ability levels.

Respondent 3 said, *"Many of my students aren't advanced enough to handle novels, so I only use them for extra learning."*

Respondent 4 added, *"Students' skills vary a lot; many still find it hard to read longer texts."*

In vocational settings, this gap is even bigger.

Respondent 5 explained, *"SMK students need English that's useful for real-life situations, not complicated literary works — it might be more suitable for SMA students."*

Respondent 1 agreed, saying, *"SMK students focus more on English for specific purposes, not on stories or narrative texts."*

Other practical issues include limited time, a lack of good novel collections, and low student interest.

Teachers also struggled to choose digital novels that were appropriate for their students' ages.

➤ Theme 3: Strategies and Suggestions for Adaptation

To deal with these challenges, teachers offered useful methods for adapting novels.

Respondent 5 recommended using school literacy time or turning novels into project-based activities by mentioning that *"Literacy time can be used to read novels and improve English skills."*

Respondent 1 highlighted the need to carefully choose texts by saying *"Do some research to find novels with simple language that fit students' age and interests."*

Respondent 3 and 4 said that *"teachers should tailor the use of novels based on students' interests and abilities."*

They suggested that novels should be given as optional reading for motivated

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students, not as required reading for the whole class.

The finding of this result:

1) Teachers Recognize Clear Benefits of Using English Novels

The first main point is that teachers clearly saw the positive effects of using English novels in EFL learning. All the teachers we spoke to agreed that English novels can help with:

- Improving various language abilities like vocabulary, reading, speaking, grammar, and pronunciation.
- Building students' critical thinking and imagination.
- Teaching cultural aspects such as traditions, everyday life, and moral ideas found in the stories.

For instance, Respondent 5 said, *“Novels help students develop critical thinking, vocabulary, speaking, and reading.”*

Respondent 1 also mentioned, *“Novels improve reading skills, vocabulary, and students' imagination, and help them learn how to describe things in English.”*

2) Practical and Contextual Challenges Remain Significant

Even though there are many benefits of using English novels, teachers also pointed out several major issues that make it hard to use novels effectively, especially in the SMK setting:

- Students' skill level is too low. Many students were found to have poor reading ability to handle full-length English novels.
- Time constraints. Using novels took more time compared to using other teaching materials.
- Limited resources. Schools often do not have enough good English novels, and digital options are difficult to find that are appropriate for the students' age.

- Curriculum focus. Vocational High School students usually focused more on practical English for specific tasks rather than stories or literary texts.
- Low interest in reading. Students were not used to reading longer English texts.

Respondent 3 explained, *“Many of my students aren't advanced enough for novels, so I only use them for extra learning.”*

Respondent 5 added, *“SMK students need practical English, so novels aren't always the best choice for them.”*

Discussion

The findings indicate that although teachers largely agree on the pedagogical benefits of using English novels such as enhancing students' reading skills, vocabulary acquisition, grammatical understanding, and cross-cultural awareness they also confront notable implementation challenges. Chief among these are students' limited reading proficiency, insufficient instructional time, a lack of quality literary resources, and curricular priorities that favor functional English, particularly in vocational education settings. These obstacles align with prior research by Suoth et al. (2023) and Mardiani & Baharuddin (2023), which emphasize the need to adapt authentic texts to better suit learners' capabilities and contextual demands. In response, teachers adopt various pragmatic strategies, such as selecting shorter or simplified texts, employing novels as supplementary materials, choosing stories that are accessible and thematically relevant, or integrating literary works into project-based and literacy-oriented instruction. Ultimately, the core issue is not the appropriateness of using novels per se, but how to effectively tailor their use to align with students' learning conditions and curricular realities.

5. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that although English teachers widely acknowledge the pedagogical value of incorporating novels such as enhancing learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary development, grammatical awareness, and intercultural competence they continue to grapple with substantial challenges in adapting and implementing such literary materials in classroom practice. Key obstacles include students' limited reading proficiency, time constraints within the instructional schedule, inadequate access to appropriate literary resources, and a curriculum that places greater emphasis on functional language skills, particularly in vocational education contexts. These findings corroborate earlier studies suggesting that authentic texts frequently require modification to meet students' cognitive readiness and contextual needs.

To navigate these challenges, teachers often adopt adaptive strategies, such as selecting abridged or thematically relevant texts, positioning novels as supplementary rather than core materials, or embedding literary reading into project-based and literacy-focused activities. Thus, the central concern is not the viability of literature in language education, but how best to operationalize its use within diverse learning environments.

Future research should examine the long-term impact of literary adaptation strategies on students' language proficiency and engagement, explore technology-enhanced approaches to novel-based instruction, and investigate professional development models that support teachers in integrating literature effectively across varied educational settings.

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