



Exploring Student's Obstacles in Learning

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Abstrak

Penguasaan bahasa Inggris telah berkembang menjadi isu penting dalam pendidikan saat ini. Kegagalan dalam pembelajaran akan memberikan hasil yang tidak maksimal. Oleh karena itu, sangat penting untuk mengungkap hambatan-hambatan yang dialami oleh siswa dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris. Fokus penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui faktor-faktor yang dapat menciptakan hambatan dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris. Dalam mengumpulkan data, peneliti menggunakan metode kualitatif dimana wawancara sebagai instrumen utama. Partisipan adalah mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Negeri Makassar. Enam partisipan terpilih menjadi sampel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat empat hambatan yang paling banyak dihadapi oleh siswa. Hambatan-hambatan tersebut adalah kurangnya minat; dipengaruhi oleh lingkungan kelas yang tidak menarik, kurangnya kemahiran guru dalam bahasa Inggris; ditandai dengan ketergantungan pada pendekatan berbasis buku teks dan instruksi lisan terbatas, kurangnya pengulangan; ditandai dengan belajar hanya ketika diperlukan, dan kurangnya motivasi; dipengaruhi oleh minat atau keingintahuan siswa. Hambatan-hambatan tersebut relevan dalam pengembangan pengajaran bahasa Inggris untuk menciptakan pembelajaran yang efektif.

Kata Kunci: Kendala siswa, bahasa Inggris, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris

Abstract

English language acquisition has grown to be a significant issue in education nowadays. Failure in learning will have unsuccessful result. It is therefore important to reveal the obstacles experienced by students in learning English. Hence, the focus of this research is to find out the factors which can create the obstacles in learning English. To collect the data, the researcher used qualitative method which interview as the main instrument. The participants were the students of English Education Program in State University of Makassar. There were six participants chosen as the sample. The findings showed that four obstacles mostly faced by students. Those were lack of interest; influenced by uninspiring classroom environment, teacher's lack of proficiency in English; characterized by reliance on textbook based

approaches and limited oral instruction, lack of repetition; characterized by learning only when required, and lack of motivation; influenced by the student's personal interest or curiosity. Those obstacles are then relevant in the development of English language teaching to create effective learning.

Keywords: *Students' obstacle, English, learning English*

Introduction

There are more than 700 local languages spoken across different regions in Indonesia, with bahasa Indonesia serving as the national language. As a result, Indonesians are generally bilingual, using bahasa Indonesia alongside their local language as their mother tongue or first language. In addition to these, learning English has become increasingly relevant in the era of globalization, where cross-cultural communication is essential. While English often dominates the discourse on foreign languages, there are numerous other foreign languages, such as Mandarin, Arabic, French, and Japanese that are gaining prominence in education and cultural exchanges.

Learning English is a critical skill in today's interconnected world. English for example used by many people in different countries to interact and relate each other. In addition, it is used almost in all areas of human life like books, scientific fields, websites, computers and so forth. It then becomes the reason of the government to regulate English as a compulsory subject in formal education. It has been taught starting from junior high school to senior high school. Even at the higher education level, almost the entire department provide English as the compulsory subject for one or two semesters even though the disciplines taken are not related to it. Hence, it shows how important the mastery of it.

In non-native contexts, such as Indonesia, where bahasa Indonesia and regional languages dominate, the integration of English in education is vital for fostering global communication. Hiver *et al* (2021) emphasizes that foreign language acquisition involves not only cognitive challenges but also socio-emotional engagement. Despite advancements, learners often face

obstacles, such as language anxiety, limited practice opportunities, and motivational issues, which hinder effective learning outcomes. Addressing these barriers require a deeper understanding of learner engagement and tailored pedagogical strategies.

On the other hand, learning English is not without its challenges. The unique structures, grammar, vocabulary, and cultural nuances of each foreign language can pose significant difficulties. Spending a large amount of time in studying English is not a guarantee for achieve it. Students often report that their proficiency remains limited. Khajloo (2013) said that although the students have spent a lot of time to study English in their class, they cannot achieve a desirable level in various language skills, and they also are not able to make English sentences without making an error. In impact, they have lost their time and cost but the desirable result cannot be achieved yet. In this case, students cannot achieve it because they have some obstacle in learning English. Hiver *et al* also state that the barriers can hinder learners' progress even after years of study. These obstacles can stem from several factors, such as lack of interest and motivation for learning, lack of concentration in class, students who are ahead of others, teacher's lack of proficiency in teaching language, and lack of repetition and frequent practice of students.

Those factors of course influence a bad learning environment for students which automatically influence the fluency and mastery of English. Understanding these obstacles is critical to improving language learning outcomes. It is therefore important to reveal about it. Hence, this research will reveal the obstacles that the students face in learning English in classroom

with the focus is to find out the factors which are create the obstacles in learning English.

Method

This research employed qualitative research using descriptive model. It is to explore the students' obstacles in learning English. The qualitative research was chosen because it aims to deeply understand the experiences, views, and perceptions of participants related to the students' obstacles in learning English. There were six participants taken as the subject of this research. Those were from class A of English Education Program in State University of Makassar. The researcher selected the participants by purposive sampling technique. It was based on their ability to provide relevant and in-depth information on the research topic. Participants were considered to represent a variety of experiences and views in the context under study.

The researcher, in collecting data, used interview as the main instrument by asking all of the participants to answer the questions given. If there is unclear answer, the researcher asked the participants to get more explanation. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to allow flexibility in data collection, so that participants could provide broader and deeper answers according to their experiences.

Data obtained from the interviews were analysed using a thematic approach. The analysis process included data transcription, coding, and grouping of key themes relevant to the research objectives. These steps were taken to identify certain patterns that reflected the experiences and views of the participants.

Result and Discussion

This part deals with the result from interviewing six participants about their experiences in learning English including the obstacles they find during learning it. All of the participants have been getting acknowledged with English since more than 10 years ago when they were in elementary school. Some of them

were not only studying English in public school, but also in private courses. Here is their history.

	Joining private course	Time
Participant 1	✓	Elementary school
Participant 2	✓	Junior High School
Participant 3	✗	
Participant 4	✗	
Participant 5	✗	
Participant 6	✗	

Four participants above have never joined private English course. They only learn it in public school and autodidactic learning. Hence, they often face any difficulties in grammatical function, pronunciation in speaking, or in understanding the meaning of the words contextually. The more explanation about the factors that create such obstacles will be explained as follow.

a. Lack of interest

Participants 1 and participant 6 said that they enjoy learning English in classroom because there is no pressure and the way of each teacher taught in the classroom is vary. While, the rest of participants felt interested in learning English depends on the situation in class. If the atmosphere of the class was good and the material was interesting which was supported by good strategies applied by the teacher, they will enjoy the class. Comparing with the situation in public school, they (who joined private English course) argued that it was more interesting and amazing to learn in private course than in public school. Participant 3, for instance, argued that he only studied English because he was a student of English department. Participant 2, 3, 4, and 5

indicate that they have low motivation to learn English.

When someone feels interested in particular activity, s/he feels like toward that activity and has positive feeling to do it. Mercer and Dornyei (2020) stated that when learners engage with a language through enjoyable and relevant activities, they develop a deeper connection with the subject, which enhances their skills and knowledge. It means that when someone is interested in language, s/he will care about it and do supporting activities to increase her/his comprehension. It is one of biggest factor that may affect English learning process. In addition, Hiver et al. (2021) highlight that the classroom environment, teaching strategies, and interactive activities significantly impact students' motivation and emotional engagement. Similarly, Lee and Lee (2021) found that students who participate in technology-enhanced language learning outside traditional classrooms often report higher enjoyment and motivation. This suggests that creating supportive and stimulating environments, both in and outside the classroom, is crucial for fostering language learning interest and overcoming motivational barriers.

b. Teacher's lack of proficiency in foreign language

Teacher's proficiency affects the result of learning process. Participant 2, 3, and 5 said that many teachers did not show their best in teaching English, as a result, they sometimes understood the material but sometimes did not. In particular meeting, teachers made it interesting while in other meeting, they made it to be boring. Participant 5 added that sometimes teacher taught beyond the material that used to be taught, and even did not relate to the material. In this case, the teacher cannot be a model to show how English language is used to their students.

To teach English effectively, teachers must possess both pedagogical and technical proficiency in language. Shao and Parkinson (2021) highlighted that teacher's interaction and language proficiency are pivotal in creating an engaging classroom environment, directly impacting students' language acquisition. Similarly, Wang *et al* (2023) found that when

teachers incorporate diverse and interactive methods, such as technology-enhanced learning, it fosters higher motivation and proficiency among students.

Teaching English is best done when the teacher teaches orally and little use the first language, so the students can adopt it and feel the language atmosphere. With a situation created in classroom, the students will be obliged to speak English fluently and try to learn it better.

c. Lack of repetition

The findings show that the participants of this research have different duration in practicing. Participant 1 studied only when there was assignment given. While, participant 3 and 6 practiced from 4 to 5 times a week or about 20 hours a week. It was because both of them are a teacher in public course, so they learn related material before going to teach, and as their time to practice English. It was also done by participant 2 who teach English almost every day. Consistent and deliberate practice significantly enhances English fluency and overall proficiency. It is in line with (McDonough & Sato, 2023) who found that interactive communicative activities and contextual learning approaches are effective in building fluency and accuracy in language use. In addition, Shao & Parkinson (2021) also highlighted that structured practice, such as role-playing and targeted repetition exercises, improves oral communication skills while fostering greater confidence among learners.

Different from those four participants, participant 4 repeated the language in library whereas participant 5 repeated the language when joining English meeting course, but she did not come consistently. Hence, it makes them cannot speak English fluently. The phrase "Practice makes perfect" remains a foundational concept in second language acquisition. More students practice using English language routinely, it will make them being familiar with thinking to use English language. As the result, they will be able to communicate fluently in oral or written language.

Study by Wang *et al* (2023) noted that students who engage in frequent and varied

language practice are more likely to develop functional proficiency in both written and spoken language. However, it also points out disparities in practice duration among students, which directly impacts their progress. Learners who combine regular practice with meaningful interactions, such as peer discussions or interactive tasks, tend to outperform those who rely solely on rote textbook exercises. This aligns with findings that emphasize the importance of balancing routine practice with engaging, real-life language use to promote fluency.

d. Lack of motivation

Asking the participants about the reason why they learn English, four of them (participant 1, participant 2, participant 5, and participant 6) acknowledged that English is not their native language, so they feel did not have duty to learn it. Participant 4 added that he learned English just because it is international language and got it at public school. Feeling whom they do not have duty to learn English is a sign of lack of motivation. Motivation plays a crucial role in achieving language learning goals, serving as a driving force that encourages learners to make consistent efforts.

Peng *et al* (2021) stated that motivation enhances both academic engagement and perseverance, which are essential for mastering a new language. Connecting to this research, the finding shows that the obstacles is influenced by intrinsic motivation from the students. Intrinsic motivation derived from the student's personal interest or curiosity about English.

CONCLUSION

English learning process cannot be separated with the various obstacles experienced by students. This research found that the obstacles can be in form of motivation, interest, teacher's proficiency, and repetition. Among these, the most influencing factor is teachers' proficiency in teaching, both in material and strategy.

It is proved by the participants' answer in case of interest in learning process in classroom and teacher's proficiency level that they more

engaged in learning when the teacher uses a variety of teaching methods. They highlighted that their engagement in learning improves significantly. Conversely, some teachers who teach beyond the core material or fail to deliver it effectively tend to disengage students.

In case of repetition, it also emerged as a critical factor. Some of the participant do repetition in a week as well as do their own strategies in learning English, but there is also participant who only study or repeat the material when there is assigned tasks. This inconsistency in practice undermines language acquisition and have impact on student's proficiency.

Ultimately, these obstacles cannot be ignored, as they significantly impact on student proficiency. These obstacles are essential to create more effective and inclusive English learning environment. Hence, this research is expected to be comprehensive input or additional knowledge for English teachers in overcoming and encouraging more effective English learning environment.

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Authors' Profile

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