

Mapping the Hurdles: A Comprehensive Study on Students' Difficulties in Learning English at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Ternate City, North Maluku

Nurlaily Sofyan¹, Karlina Amran²

^{1,2} Faculty of Education, Muhammadiyah University of North Maluku, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: Education is basically an effort in educating students to master knowledge and technology, but of course there are some factors that can influence the development of education itself. Besides, students also have obstacles or problems that can hinder the progress of their study English, so the aim of this study is "To know the extent of students' difficulties in learning English".

This research used qualitative descriptive design. The data was collected through interviews and questionnaires in order to find out students' opinion and to gather students' perspectives about their difficulties. The subjects of this research were 20 students taken randomly in class 8D of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Ternate City, North Maluku. Technique analyzing data is quoted from Soegiyono (2015: 246) employed four steps, namely data collection, data reduction, data display, and a conclusion drawing or verification.

Based on research findings on students' difficulties in learning English, it can be concluded that students experience obstacles in several main aspects, namely vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and speaking skills. These difficulties are caused by various factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include lack of self-confidence, anxiety in speaking, and limitations in understanding the structure of the English language. Meanwhile, external factors include less interactive teaching methods, lack of opportunities to practice speaking as well as less the support from family.

Corresponding Author:
Nurlaily Sofyan

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INTRODUCTION

Education is basically an effort in educating students to master knowledge and technology as well as instilling personality and character values which is in line with Indonesian state and its culture, and there are some factors that can influence the development of education itself, one of them is teacher as the center of transferring knowledge in teaching and learning process. As Sofyan and Soleman (2022: 22) cited in Karnoto (2012) claims that In Indonesia, learning English is facing the similar situation. The emphasis is mastery of grammar, and focused on the book. Studying English in Indonesia is arguably challenging. It relatively depends on many factors. One of the elements which can possible affect students studying English is lecturer or teacher.

Lecturer as individual conceivably affects the students studying English. Every lecturer has distinguished characteristics which underlay behavior, thinking, attitudes which are exposed on a daily basis (Freud, 2000). This is also supported by Alisha, Safitri and Santoso (2019: 21), however Indonesian students as foreign language learners have some difficulties to master English. For example, the students of senior high school have to master all language skills, and it is not easy to get it.

Also, in the activities of teaching, a teacher should be able to do harmonious communication. This harmonious communication as an indicator of an activity that can make student enthusiasm to attend the learning. A teaching can be running and succeeding well if educators are able to change students themselves in a broad sense as well as increase students' awareness in learning process, when they are involved in the teaching process which can be felt directly for personal development. Sintadewi, Artini, and Febryan (2020: 432) viewed that it is necessary to possess a good motivator or facilitator, namely the presence of a teacher in front of the class because basically the teaching and learning process is a series of interactions between teachers and students in order to achieve learning objectives. Besides, in teaching and learning process, the interaction both two sides or directions

between teacher and students is very important because they play an active role in building the comprehension of the material given and the methods used is also influence the process of learning itself. Classroom learning activities is the heart of the curriculum. It means that whether it is successful or not it is depending on the learning process experienced by students themselves because the success of the learning process in the classroom is marked by the achievement of teaching itself.

Generally, there are several obstacles that can hinder the progress of study. For example, there are some schools still have limitation of facilities or lack of infrastructure, such computer, language laboratory that support the process of learning, teacher still use conventional method in teaching, lack of interesting media, and the most students' problems are the lack of power concentration and their motivation. Do to the above problems, there is research conducted by Suryanto and Eka Sari (2021: 328). This research demonstrates the difficulties faced by ELED (English Education Department) and Non-ELED (Non-English Education Department) students and their strategies to deal with the difficulties in learning English language. In this research, the researchers founds out that ELED and non-ELED faced difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, developing ideas, writing, speaking, and listening. Each participant, whether ELED or non-ELED students, faced those difficulties aside from developing idea and writing. ELED students only face the difficulty in Developing ideas in writing. In developing ideas, ELED students mentioned that it's hard to write and pour the idea in writing even though they already had the idea. Meanwhile, for writing, non-ELED students mentioned that they were difficult in using the right tenses and word order.

Mapping the Hurdles: A Comprehensive Study on Students' Difficulties in Learning English would likely to explore the various challenges students face when learning English as a foreign language. These challenges can be categorized into linguistic factors (like vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar) and non-linguistic factors (such as motivation, confidence, and learning environment). So, the problem statement in this research is "To what extends the students' difficulties in learning English"? And the aim of this study is "To know the extends of students' difficulties in learning English".

METHOD

To describe the result of students' difficulties in learning English at SMP Muhammdiyah 1 Ternate city, the researchers used qualitative descriptive design. The data was collected through interviews and questionnaires in order to find out students' opinion and to gather students' perspectives. The researchers prepare some questions and asked the students about their difficulties. The subjects of this research were 20 students taken randomly in class 8D of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Ternate City, North Maluku. Technique analyzing data is quoted from Soegiyono (2015: 246) employed four steps, namely data collection, after the data is collected from the field; the next steps are data reduction, data display, and a conclusion drawing or verification (Sintadewi, Artini, and Febryan, 2020: 433-434).

RESEARCH RESULT

The researchers present the results based on interviews and questionnaires that have been given to students. The data obtained will be described in several sections to understand students' difficulties in learning English or we can say mapping the hurdles as well as factors influence them.

1. Interview Results

Based on interviews with the students in class 8D of SMP Muhammadiyah

1 Ternate city which is related to their difficulties in learning English. The following table is the inferences of their answers:

Table 3.1. The Results of Interview

| No | Interview's Questions | Description on Students' Answer |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | Do you like studying English? | The majority of students said that yes, they like English, but it is difficult to master it. |
| 2. | What is your opinion about English? | Mostly students consider English as an important subject, but again it is difficult because the vocabulary and grammar are different from Indonesian. |
| 3. | Do you feel difficulty when you study English? | Almost all students said yes. They agree if it is difficult to learn English. They answer based on their own experience. |
| 4. | What is your difficulty in learning English? | Lack of vocabulary is the main difficulty faced by students, followed by difficulty in learning English grammar and lack of confidence in speaking. |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 5. | What is your motivation to learn English? | Most students are motivated to learn English because they want to get a better job in the next future. |
| 6. | How about the method used by the teacher in the teaching and learning process? | Some students said that the method employed by the teacher is still using traditional method, so it is not interesting, that is why sometimes they felt bored while studying. |
| 7. | Do your parents give support for you to study English? | Some respondent feel supported by their parents, but some do not get encouragement from their families. |
| 8. | According to you, what should we do to be able to know English well? | Students suggested practicing speaking more, listening to songs or watching movies in English, and increasing the stock of vocabulary. |

Based on the result of interviews above, the researchers can put it into several points as follows:

1. Actually, most students like English very much, but they still find difficulty to master it. Their motivation to learn English comes from the desire to improve their communication skills and understand the subject matter.
2. The most difficulty is lack of vocabulary, less mastery of grammar, and lack of confidence in speaking English.
3. The teacher's teaching methods should be various in order to help students more interesting in learning English, also improve the classroom environment.
4. The important thing is getting full support and encouragement from their families.
5. Students believe that they should study harder to overcome their difficulties in English. They want more interesting and interactive learning methods, such as the use of educational games or more frequent speaking practice in class.

2. Questionnaire Results

From the results of the questionnaire that has been given to students, several important findings were obtained as in the table below:

Table 3.2. The Results of Questionnaire

| No | Statements | SA(5) | A(4) | N(3) | DA(2) | SD(1) | Mean | Inter-pretation |
|----|---|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------|-----------------|
| 1 | I Feel difficulty in learning English | 6 (30%) | 8 (40%) | 3 (15%) | 1 (5%) | 2 (10%) | 3.8 | High |
| 2 | I have many difficulties in learning English | 5 (25%) | 9 (45%) | 4 (20%) | 2 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 3.85 | High |
| 3 | I have great motivation in learning English | 7 (35%) | 6 (30%) | 5 (25%) | 2 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 3.9 | High |
| 4 | I have no self confidence in the classroom | 5 (25%) | 6 (30%) | 6 (30%) | 3 (15%) | 0 (0%) | 3.65 | High |
| 5 | A lot of factors influence us in learning English | 6 (30%) | 8 (40%) | 4 (20%) | 2 (20%) | 0 (0%) | 3.9 | High |
| 6 | I still lack of English vocabulary | 6 (30%) | 8 (40%) | 4 (20%) | 2 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 3.9 | High |
| 7 | For me, English grammar is difficult | 7 (35%) | 6 (30%) | 5 (25%) | 2 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 3.9 | High |
| 8 | The support from family is very important | 10 (50%) | 5 (25%) | 3 (15%) | 2 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 4.15 | High |
| 9 | The strategy & method used by teacher should be interesting | 9 (45%) | 6 (30%) | 3 (15%) | 2 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 4.1 | High |
| 10 | The solution to every problem in learning is studying hard | 12 (60%) | 4 (20%) | 3 (15%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | 4.35 | Very High |

Based on the above table, it is obviously showed that all the result counting is in the high position. The highest score lies in questionnaire number 10 with the point 4.35. (The solution to every problem in learning is studying hard). It means that all respondents agree that study hard is the key to every problem in learning. The next position is statement number 8 with the point 4.15 (The support from family is very important) which clearly state that family is the support system for students to have the spirit as well as interest in learning process. Followed by statement number 9 where the point is 4.1. (The strategy & method used by teacher should be interesting). It is true that the method use by the teacher is influence the interest and also the result of students' studying. One of the key for success in learning knowledge is the employ of method and strategy presented by the teacher. So, the teacher should pay attention for the method used in teaching in the classroom.

The point of questionnaire number 2 (I have many difficulties in learning English) is 3.85. As we already known that English just consider as a foreign language for Indonesian students, thus automatically it is difficult to learn especially for the beginner. The difference in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation or we called it as language component became one of the factor for students to master English

. Questionnaire number 4 with the point 3.65. (I have no self confidence in the classroom). This is also the problem for the students, lack of self-confidence. So, the teacher should always give them the support and motivation to be active in the process of learning. Whereas, Questionnaire number 3, (I have great motivation in learning English), number 5 (A lot of factors influence us in learning English), number 6 (I still lack of English vocabulary) and number 7 (For me, English grammar is difficult). All of them have the same point that is 3.9. And the last is Questionnaire number 4 which is in the point 3.8. (I Feel difficulty in learning English). This statement is almost the same meaning with the statement number 2. The problem in learning English is mostly students feel difficult to understand and master it well.

DISCUSION

As it has been explain above that the result of interviews has been clearly show that there are 5 points which is dealing with the students' difficulties in learning English, such as: it is not easy to master English well because lack of vocabulary, less mastery of grammar, and lack of confidence in speaking English, the method is not interesting, also less of support from families.

And from the result of questionnaire, there are some problems found related to students' difficulties in learning English, like: less of family's support, lack of good method from teacher, or the method is not various, lack of self- confidence, lack of English vocabulary, and according to them that grammar is difficult, so that is why they feel difficulty to learn English. Even though, there are many things that became their difficulties, but in this case, the students realize that study hard is the key to get success. This is very important because they have possessed self-awareness to improve their selves. So that is why this is in the highest position or 4. 35. (The solution to every problem in learning is studying hard).

From 2 instruments implemented in this study, it seen clearly that there is the correlation between the result of interview and also the result of questionnaire. Dealing with this study, there is a research conducted by Sintadewi, Artini, and Febryan (2020, p. 436) about Analysis of English Learning Difficulty of Students in Elementary School found that the difficulty of students in understanding English material is triggered by several things, especially in the less than optimal ability of teachers to present learning by not mastering learning materials, not using appropriate methods and media, and less able to manage class and the unavailability of handbook or textbooks for students.

There is also a thesis written by Nur Alviah (2022) with the title "Analysis of Student's Difficulties in Learning English at the Second Grade of SMP 2 Tellu Limpoe Kab. Sidrap. The result of research showed that students' difficulty in learning English in four skills namely speaking, listening, writing and reading, such as difficulty in pronunciation, difficulty in understanding the language, difficulty in writing and reading the text, difficulty in translation, and difficulty in to understand language. Factors that cause student's difficulty in learning English are internal and external factors. In internal factors consist of cognitive aspects, namely memorization skills, material mastery abilities. For the affective aspect, the factors that cause student's difficulties in learning are lack of interest in learning, not confident and have no motivation in learning. In external factors, the family environment that is the factor that causes students to have learning difficulties is the lack of parental attention in guiding their children, while studying at home. For the school environment, the factor that causes students to have learning difficulties is the way the teacher teaches.

If we compare two previous studies above, it obviously show that there is the correlation among two finding. Basically, students' difficulties in learning English are cause by several points, namely lack of vocabulary, less mastery of grammar, and lack of confidence in speaking English. These difficulties are caused by two factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include lack of self-confidence, anxiety in speaking, and limitations in understanding the structure of the English language. Meanwhile, external factors include less interactive teaching methods, minimal exposure to English in everyday environments, and lack of opportunities to practice speaking as well as family supporting. So, if we want to reduce students' difficulties in learning English, first focus on building a strong foundation in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, besides it should possess encouraging practical application of the language through various activities. This is also strengthened by Nur alviah (2023) in her thesis: Analysis of Student's Difficulties in Learning English at the Second Grade of SMPN 2 Tellu Limpoe kab. Sidrap found that

the teacher also has the responsibility of guiding their students to learn English. Mostly they are scared to pronounce English, and it makes their reading skills poor. So, the teacher and students should cooperate in learning the language.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on research findings on students' difficulties in learning English, it can be concluded that students experience obstacles in several main aspects, namely vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and speaking skills. These difficulties are caused by various factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include lack of self-confidence, anxiety in speaking, and limitations in understanding the structure of the English language. Meanwhile, external factors include less interactive teaching methods, lack of opportunities to practice speaking as well as less the support from family.

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